METRO / A26

No patients in this 'Recovery Room' in Alabang, only diners

SPORTS / A29

Miñoza settles for 3-way tie for 2nd in Indonesian Open

ACROSS / A17

Soldiers' votes seen to be used against party-lists

LIFESTYLE / C1

Foreign 'rondalla' groups in Dumaguete for RP Arts Festival

Angara feels sure he won't get cheated

SEGURISTA KA DIN HA!

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

IT SOUNDS CRASS BUT senatorial candidate Edgardo Angara says it is true.

Angara said he believed his chances of winning in the May 14 elections had

ANGARA/ A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, February 19, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 73 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

DOJ: No legal problem if nurses retake exam

By Leila B. Salaverria and Nikko Dizon

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ THINKS there is no legal problem if the government complies with the requirement that those who passed the June 2006 nursing licensure exam be made to retake the leakage-tainted Tests 3 and 5 before they are allowed to work in the United States.

"If the Professional Regulation Commission

DOJ/ A23

'Allow Erap to campaign'

Recto, Pichay: Bet needs at least ₱120M

By Michael Lim Ubac

DAVAO CITY—MONEY, LOTS OF IT, CAN determine the outcome of the senatorial race, according to two members of the administration's Team Unity slate.

Reelectionist Sen. Ralph Recto and Surigao del Sur. Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. told reporters while campaigning at Gaisano Mall here that a senatorial candidate was allowed to raise P120 million and the party could give him or her an additional P80 million each to attain a nationwide reach.

Recto, Team Unity's richest senatorial candidate with a declared net worth of P260 million in 2005, said the P120 million was the limit imposed by the Commission on Elections.

But Pichay said the administration's 12-member ticket could spend an additional P80 million for each candidate, for a total of P200 million each.

"If you really want to go maximum, you go as high as P200 million," said Pichay, pointing out that each candidate could spend P3 to P5 for about 40 million voters nationwide.

The Comelec has set the spending limit for a senatorial candidate at P3 for each registered voter. A political party and an independent candidate can spend P5.

RECTO/ A22

News stories by the youth for the youth

By Ellen Wong
Contributor

DRESSED IN JEANS, PINK T-SHIRT AND bright sequined shoes, 19-year-old Apple Fale jumps up and down holding a microphone.

Wearing a yellow top and a neon lemon headband, Nicai de Guzman, 17, bops her headphone-wrapped head to music only she can hear.

For his part, Angelo Supe, 19, his hair dyed and spiked, counts down with his fingers: Five, four, three, two, one…

"Welcome to Kabataan X-Press! *Ang programang gawa ng kabataan para sa kabataan* (the program produced by the youth for the youth)," Fale says to the camera and smiles.

NEWS STORIES/ A5

DESPITE tight security, some of the candidates of the opposition get their chance to be endorsed personally by former President Joseph Estrada at his mother's home in Greenhills, San Juan, Sunday. From left (front row) are Aquilino Pimentel III, Loren Legarda, Nikki Coseteng, and (second row) are Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, chair of the United Opposition, Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino, Francis Escudero and Panfilo Lacson. AFP

Melo report: Saga of a breach in transparency

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

WHEN PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo ordered the release last week of the much-awaited Melo Commission report on the death squad killings, it caused no little amount of disappointment that Malacañang announced that copies would be released only to the European Union and the United Nations.

The report will not be released to the Filipino people, who are the victims of the extrajudicial executions which have claimed more than 800 lives of political activists since 2001. The Philippine media will have no access. Ms Arroyo does not trust the Filipino media and has a running feud with them. With this, Filipinos have been denied the fundamental right to learn what's behind the most atrocious wave of political murders since the Marcos dictatorship.

The implication of this exclusive international release is that the President has ignored that her primary accountability is to the Filipino people, not to international public opinion.

MELO REPORT/ A20

Opposition to file plea in Sandigan

By Christian V. Esguerra

LAWYERS OF FORMER PRESident Joseph Estrada are set to file a motion before the Sandiganbayan today seeking his release from house arrest to allow him to campaign for the Genuine Opposition, GO spokesperson Adel Tamano announced yesterday.

"Obviously, he's frustrated because he wants to be part of this process," Tamano said. "President Estrada, who is presumed innocent, has the right to participate in this constitutional process."

Tamano said Estrada should be allowed to receive opposition officials, endorse candidates with photo opportunities, and even join campaign sorties.

"We should remember that even if he was not allowed to post bail, the restrictions on bail, under the law and the Constitution, were just to prevent him from leaving," he claimed. "We all know that he won't leave. So there's no reason whatsoever not to let him campaign. We all know that he won't run away."

Estrada, whose trial for plunder just ended six years after a military-backed "people power" revolt cut short his rule,

ALLOW ERAP/ A22

PHOTOS BY REM ZAMORA

WELCOME HOME, HEROES
President Macapagal-Arroyo can't hide her happiness as she welcomes to Malacañang Saturday night the 24 Filipino seamen who were freed after being held hostage in Nigeria. The families of the workers were also on hand to welcome them back.

WHEN THE STATE IS THE TERRORIST

'They're supposed to be our protectors'

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

HIPOLITO Asucena with Nelson's wife Marifel and daughter Lyka.

By Phoebe Zoe Sanchez and Jamir Niño Ocampo

(First of two parts)

(Editor's note: Sanchez is assistant professor at the University of the Philippines Visayas working on her Ph.D. in Sociology; Ocampo is with the UP School of Economics. The two were invited by Taripnon, an ecology group in the Cagayan Valley, to study the impact of a military presence as a form of terrorism. Following is their report.)

"PALPASIN NIYO DA KAME URAY ku pinatay yu diay maymaysak nga baru!" (Better still, kill us all. You have just killed my only son!)" the old man cried in anguish as he cradled his dying son Nelson Asucena in his arms.

iAM *Report*
Fernando del Mundo
Chief

Bleeding from M16 and M14 bullet wounds, Nelson made his last wish for his father Hipolito to take care of his family—his wife Marifel and 3-year-old daughter Lyka.

Asucena, 19, Sangguniang Kabataan chair of Barangay San Juan, Zinundungan Valley, thus became the 821st victim of extrajudicial killings, according to Karapatan, a human rights group (261st by the INQUIRER count), since President Macapagal-Arroyo became president in 2001.

The elder Asucena pointed to Lt. Marcelo Pascua, Alpha company commander of the 21st Infantry Battalion (IB), as the man primarily responsible for the death of his son, a daily companion who helped him plow the fields and shared with him the hardships of peasant life.

He talked with a fact-finding

THEY'RE/ A20

Antiterrorism bill 101

By DJ Yap, TJ Burgonio and Nancy Carvajal

LAWYER MARIA SOCORRO Diokno cites a hostage-taking incident to illustrate what to her is the conundrum of the antiterrorism bill that is likely to overcome its final hurdle in Congress today before it is sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo to be signed into law.

The Senate version of the bill was adopted earlier this month by the bicameral conference committee. The Senate later passed the bill. Today, the House in plenary is

ANTITERRORISM/ A20

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern sections of Central and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/18/07 SOURCE **PAGASA**

Robust economic growth seen in '07

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY IS EXPECTED TO enjoy robust growth in 2007—provided the perennial problem of politics does not get in the way, analysts say.

A raft of positive economic figures in recent weeks and the passage of the P1.13 trillion national budget have been greeted positively by international investors.

The California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) recently raised its rating of the Philippines, placing it above China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in terms of the countries in which it invests.

With an investment portfolio valued at $194 billion, CalPERS is the largest pension fund in the United States.

"This positive development is expected to encourage global fund managers to increase investments in the country as they take their cue from a global leader in the investment industry," Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said.

Stable inflation and interest rates, a stronger currency and revived investor confidence as reflected in portfolio investment trends all point to better prospects for the economy, a recent report by the Institute for Development and Econometric Analysis (IDEA) said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index last week hit levels last seen before the Asian financial crisis 10 years ago.

Remittances by some eight million overseas Filipino workers last year rose 19.4 percent from 2005 to a record $12.8 billion. This year remittances are expected to top $14 billion, according to a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said he was confident gross domestic product (GDP) this year would grow at 6.1-6.7 percent, compared to 5.4 percent in 2006.

The budget for 2007 should see an increase in spending on infrastructure and services, which are expected to jumpstart economic activity, Neri said.

This is only the third budget President Macapagal-Arroyo has seen passed since she came to power in 2001.

Under Philippine law, if the budget is not passed by Congress, the government is forced to revert to the previous budget.

Last year, for example, the government had to reenact its 2005 budget, which limited its ability to increase spending on much-needed infrastructure projects, schools and social services.

But the slowdown in government spending did have a positive impact on the deficit, which last year fell to P62.2 billion, less than half the government's P125 billion target ceiling for the year.

The government intends to limit its budget deficit this year to P63 billion.

Even the private sector is bullish.

Jaime Augusto Zobel, chair of Ayala Corp., one of the country's largest conglomerates, said "the fundamentals are in place for sustained economic recovery and growth."

"Key sectors of the economy are presenting opportunities that are creating multiplier effects on other industries," he said as his company announced record net profits for 2006.

But while the budget problem seems to be out of the way, political roadblocks remain.

Ms Arroyo is facing congressional and local elections in May, which are widely seen as a referendum on her administration.

Campaigning is expected to be fierce, raising concerns the government will start giving out cash to win votes. *AFP*

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'Buoyed' Team Unity hits Davao after Cebu launch

By Michael Lim Ubac

DAVAO CITY—BUOYED BY THE ENDORSEment of President Macapagal-Arroyo, Team Unity hit the campaign trail yesterday, the candidates flying together to Davao City to woo Mindanao voters.

The team left Cebu City barely a day after President Arroyo personally proclaimed all 12 senatorial bets inside a packed Cebu Coliseum.

The midday scorching heat greeted members of the administration's senatorial ticket at the Davao International Airport, still they lost no time in motoring to a local restaurant where they met with hundreds of local officials led by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles.

While some administration senatorial candidates settled for the usual motorcade, reelectionist Senators Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto and Edgardo Angara, and Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. had something else in mind.

All four had their individual stratagems to attract the attention of Davaoeños.

Biker Ralph

Recto got on a big motorcycle—a yellow Ducati—and made his way to the first store along the highway selling durian, the prickly fruit known for its distinctive taste and odor.

Recto invited his colleague Arroyo—who opted to ride in a van—to eat the durian and pomelo. The latter obliged.

"*Pampalakas ng tuhod* (For stronger knees)," Recto said.

A festive mood filled the airport as hundreds of supporters, including motorcycle-riding members of the Kababayan Riders Association for a New Cultural Harmony and Order (Karancho), welcomed Pichay.

The riders escorted Pichay to the Almendras Gym where they inducted their new directors and regional advisers.

Pichay supporters

Karancho is one of the country's largest sociocivic organizations claiming over 1.2 million Filipino bikers as members.

Karancho president, Tagum City business magnate Carlito Barena, said the group was fully behind Pichay.

Pichay said Karancho was a "very strong organization" in Mindanao and the Visayas. "This is an organization that touches the hearts of ordinary people. Their purpose is to help those in distress, particularly in times of natural disasters and emergencies," he said.

The others took the usual route of stumping candidates, visiting markets and malls, where they pressed the flesh, hugged babies and signed autographs.

Angara discusses

Angara opted to stay out of crowded places, concentrating on reaching out to sectoral groups by conducting discussions with senior citizens, youths and Muslims.

All 12 candidates converged at 7 p.m. at Rizal Park here for another proclamation rally.

Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, campaign spokesperson, said the proclamation rally held in Cebu showed the "strong bond among" the candidates.

'Strength in diversity'

He said that everyone on the slate promoted not just his or her candidacy but that of the other members of the team, disproving "remarks that the presence of candidates from different persuasions and affiliations would not add up to a unity of purpose."

"On the contrary, there is strength in diversity if there is unity in a shared vision for the country," he said.

He observed that the Cebu proclamation was "highly successful" despite the absence of entertainers who had embellished political gatherings in the past.

"We are trying to make campaigns more relevant and meaningful, because we know that our voters would appreciate a serious presentation of issues which Team Unity is focusing on," Durano said.

"At the same time, this manner of campaigning shows that Team Unity's strength does not rely on financial resources but more on its wide and deep network of support among local officials and the citizenry," he added.

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UN prober asks about Davao death squad

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
and Germelina Lacorte
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—PHILIP ALSTON, the UN Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, yesterday questioned authorities here about the alleged shadowy group Davao Death Squad (DDS) blamed for a number of killings of suspected criminals.

Lawyer Alberto Sipaco, director of the Commission on Human Rights-Southern Mindanao, said his meeting with Alston covered wide-ranging issues.

"He asked us whether or not the DDS indeed exists but I told him and his group that our investigation is ongoing, that the presence of a vigilante group is just a floating perception. There is no factual evidence that would point that the DDS, as a group liquidating suspected criminals, is real," Sipaco told the INQUIRER.

Maj. Randolf Cabangbang, spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command who met with Alston, confirmed the UN rapporteur's concerns about the reported DDS activity.

"He wanted to know what the authorities were doing to stop the group," Cabangbang said.

Earlier, Senior Supt. Jaime Morente, city police chief, denied the existence of the DDS.

He said all the evidence that the police force was able to gather on the spate of killings in the city pointed to gangsters and syndicates as the authors.

"There is just no proof that that this group is real. All the evidence are related to gang wars," Morente said.

Also yesterday, a group of indigenous lumad staged a rally in front of the hotel where Alston was meeting with local officials to air their complaint against the communist New People's Army which they claimed was behind the killing of their leaders.

Palace raps Villar over PMA speech

AFTER WARNING THAT THE ELECTIONS would "bring out the worst" in the candidates, Malacañang yesterday twitted reelectionist Senate President Manuel Villar for using the breeding ground of the country's future military leaders as a venue for politicking.

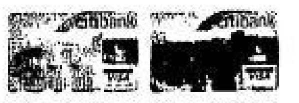
In his weekly commentary published in another daily, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said: "Senate President Manuel Villar could have chosen a more appropriate forum for partisan overtures than the Philippine Military Academy. We only wish that more prudence is observed by our leaders, leaving politics to the politicians and soldiery to the soldiers."

In his speech during the PMA homecoming in Baguio City Saturday, Villar called on the military to be "apolitical" and not allow themselves to be used in the elections. Villar also criticized the "short cuts" taken by the administration to railroad Charter change through Congress.

"This government has taken every opportunity to professionalize and modernize the Armed Forces and to insulate the uniform from politics, and we believe that all institutional leaders must stand beside us in this effort," said Bunye.

He said the military had its hands full dealing with terrorists and insurgents that it did not "need harangues from our leaders that only pull their attention away from their primary mission."

Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.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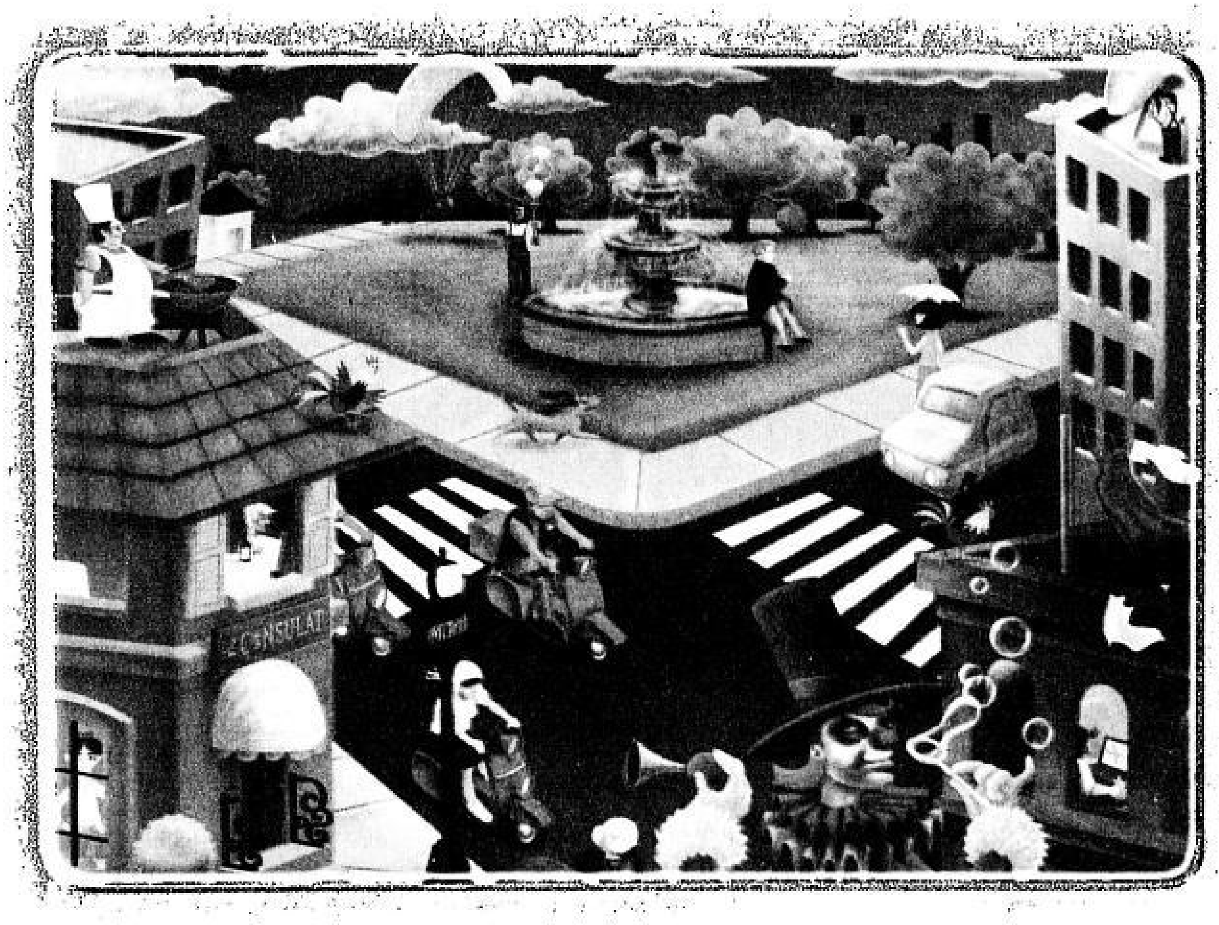
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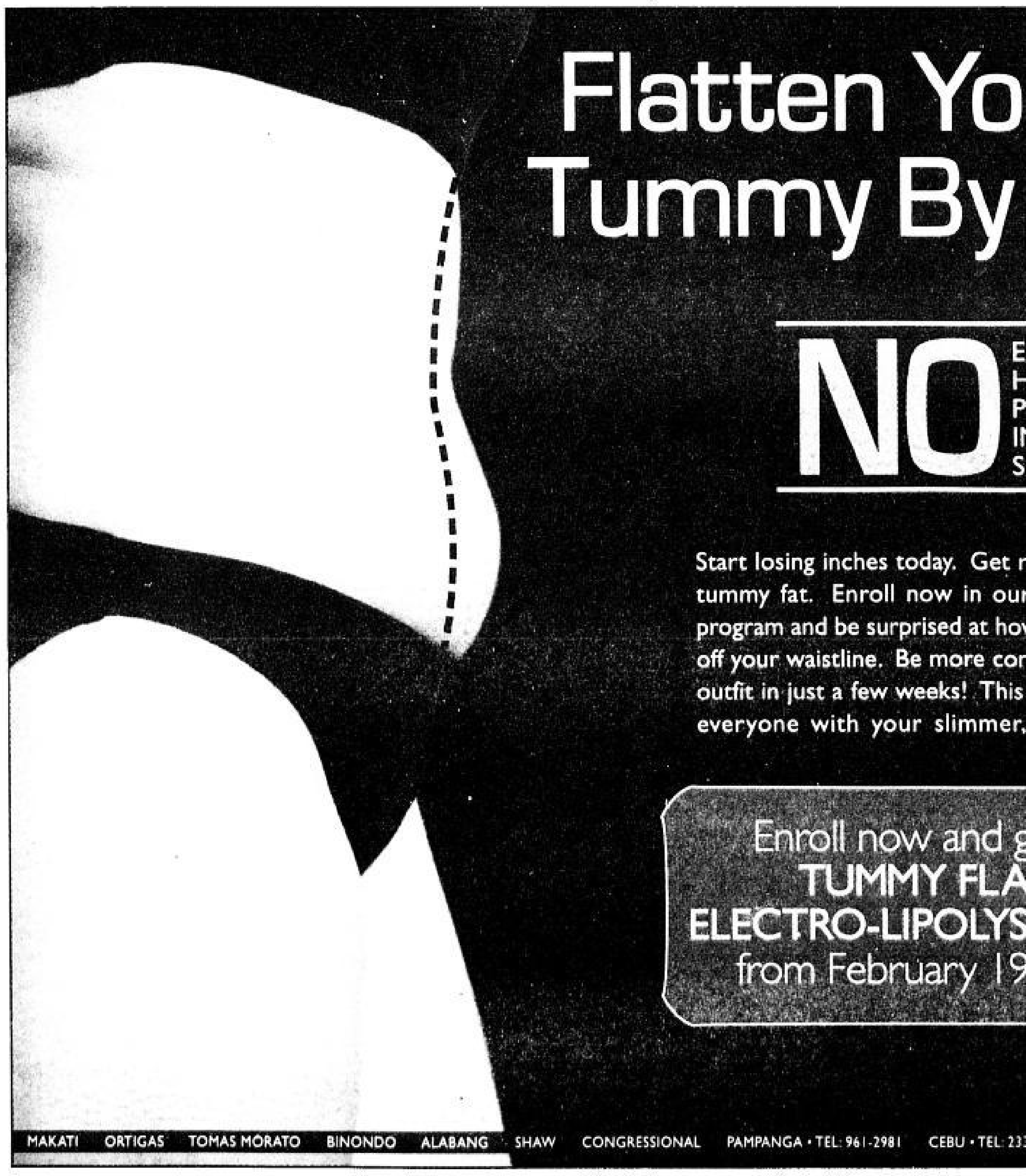
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Labor group insists it is eligible to run in polls

By Jerome Aning

THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF THE Philippines yesterday appealed to the Commission on Elections to allow it to run for a seat in the House of Representatives in the May 14 elections as a party-list group.

TUCP spokesperson Alex Aguilar argued that TUCP only registered as a sectoral party on Jan. 2, 2004, and that it was only in the May 2004 elections that the TUCP participated in the party-list polls.

"Comelec mis-appreciated our status as a registered party-list group. While it's true that the TUCP failed to win in 2004, it was only that year when TUCP participated in the party-list polls," Aguilar told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

The TUCP was among the 33 party-list groups delisted by the Comelec for failing to win and/or field candidates in the last two elections.

Under Republic Act No. 7941, or the Party-list System Act of 2005, a party-list group will lose its accreditation if it fails to participate in two consecutive elections or fails to obtain at least two percent of all votes cast under the party-list system in two consecutive elections.

The TUCP filed a motion for reconsideration on Feb. 14 seeking a reversal of the Comelec ruling disallowing the group in this year's polls.

"We are appealing to the Comelec to give recognition to TUCP, considering that our workers, being a truly marginalized sector, need a lot of representation in the legislature," Aguilar said.

The TUCP party-list group resulted from the merger in 2004 of antecedent groups—All Workers Alliance Trade Unions (Awatu), All Trade Union Congress Party (ATUCP) and the National Congress of Unions of the Sugar Industry of the Philippines (Nacusip).

Aguilar said that with the merger, the registrations of Awatu, ATUCP and Nacusip were all canceled and a new one was given to TUCP.

"We realized that it was a mistake to launch as multiple parties so we merged to form a single party which was separately registered," he said, adding that with the merger, TUCP was able to improve its performance in 2004 when it garnered more than 200,000 votes.

"It is consequently clear that the TUCP, as a party-list organization, is separate and distinct from its predecessor organizations; it would be erroneous to tally the election record of the said precursor organizations to the TUCP," the group said.

Following the delisting, Aguilar admitted that many TUCP members "felt bad" and their enthusiasm had dampened.

He called on the Comelec to act quickly on the motion because the TUCP still intended to participate in the elections this year and had in fact launched a wider campaign and prepared its "ground troops."

The TUCP, a moderate labor group founded in 1975, claims a membership of more than half of all organized workers in the industry. It has more than 30 affiliated labor federations from the industrial and agricultural sectors.

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News stories by the youth for the youth

From page A1

Fale, De Guzman and Supe are reporters for "Kabataan X-Press," a weekly television program where 14- to 19-year-old youths write, narrate and shoot their own stories on video.

The three teenagers are part of the Manila bureau and among 160 reporters in 16 bureaus nationwide, which include Baguio, Cebu and Camarines Norte.

"'Kabataan X-Press is all about young people speaking freely. Free from advertising constraints and the opinions of adults, we get to choose our stories," explains Fale, a broadcast communication student.

The program is the latest project funded by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) with grants from the Australian and Canadian governments.

Unicef works with Probe Media Foundation Inc. (PMFI), which provides the media training for the young reporters.

Last Saturday, "Kabataan X-Press," which was previously shown on ABC-5, aired for the first time on ABS-CBN.

Super heroes?

The show is the brainchild of the Unicef chief communication officer, Dale Rustein, who introduced a similar project in the Balkans.

"'Kabataan X-Press' very powerfully and visibly demonstrates the right of children to express their opinions on issues that affect them. The role models provided will hopefully send a signal to kids that they can ask questions, that they can inquire why things are happening. They won't feel that the world is run by rich and powerful people and that they have nothing to say about it," Rustein says.

Catharine Colmenares, "Kabataan X-Press" director who is also with the PMFI, says the program is a new idea. "Usually on TV, children are portrayed as passive victims of physical abuse. This is the only show that allows young people to participate. We are giving the kids power to tell their stories," she says.

The young reporters, who are students at the University of the Philippines, all want to work in media-related fields.

For De Guzman, a film student, this was not always the case.

"When I was young I wanted to be a superhero," she says. "But recently I was like, hey—I kinda am [a superhero] because we are voicing out opinions of the youth!"

Amazing stories

Colmenares is amazed by the stories the young team are working on.

"It's not just fun stuff. They tackle issues like teen prostitution, juvenile justice, street children, HIV, AIDS and child labor," she says.

The children's stories have already won numerous awards.

"Selibatbat," which deals with corporeal punishment during Holy Week and written by first-time reporter Danilo Manderazo, 19, was a finalist in the 2007 New York festival.

Fale's story, "Juvenile Justice," was the only work by a young person to get special mention at the 2006 De La Salle awards.

De Guzman is working on "Mean Gangs," which investigates the violence of teenage gangs, a subject close to her heart.

Fale, De Guzman and Supe get very excited when the bureaus are mentioned.

"We get to learn about different dialects, different kinds of people, and what's happening in different parts of the country," De Guzman says.

The program makes sure that the reporters come from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Approximately 30 percent of the young staff are from the urban poor.

Rustein explains: "The research shows that a lot of young people feel disappointed. Many feel that their only option is to go to another country. The screening of kids from all walks of life on the world's most powerful media will mean that ordinary children, Christians, Muslims, different regions, different backgrounds, can believe in what they can accomplish."

New breed

Asked to talk about their work, Fale says: "The stories are like our babies. They come from our blood and sweat."

"Kabataan X-Press" targets aspiring students like Fale who have the passion and the drive to pursue careers in journalism.

Together with hundreds of hopefuls, Fale, De Guzman and Supe wrote an essay on why they wanted to work in the media. After they were chosen, they attended a seven-day intensive workshop and they were off and running.

Colmenares hopes this on-the-job training will create "a new breed" of socially conscious and highly skilled journalists.

She says the working environment at "Kabataan X-Press" is just like any newsroom. "We don't sugarcoat it for the kids. They have to learn to submit high quality work and on time."

With school, a pressing social calendar and the TV program, Fale, De Guzman and Supe are doing a juggling act. They meet three times a week after school to work on their stories.

"When we're together, it's pretty crazy due to the antics of a certain reporter," Fale says, nudging Supe, a film student.

Supe grins and says: "When we finish a story, it's off to the parlor!" and points to his colorful hair.

De Guzman says her stories have become a family affair. "They have this tape at home with all my episodes—and I hide it. During family gatherings, they make everyone watch it. So embarrassing! Of course, I know they are just really proud of me."

The writer, the 2007 Myer Fellow from the University of Sydney, is doing her internship at the INQUIRER.

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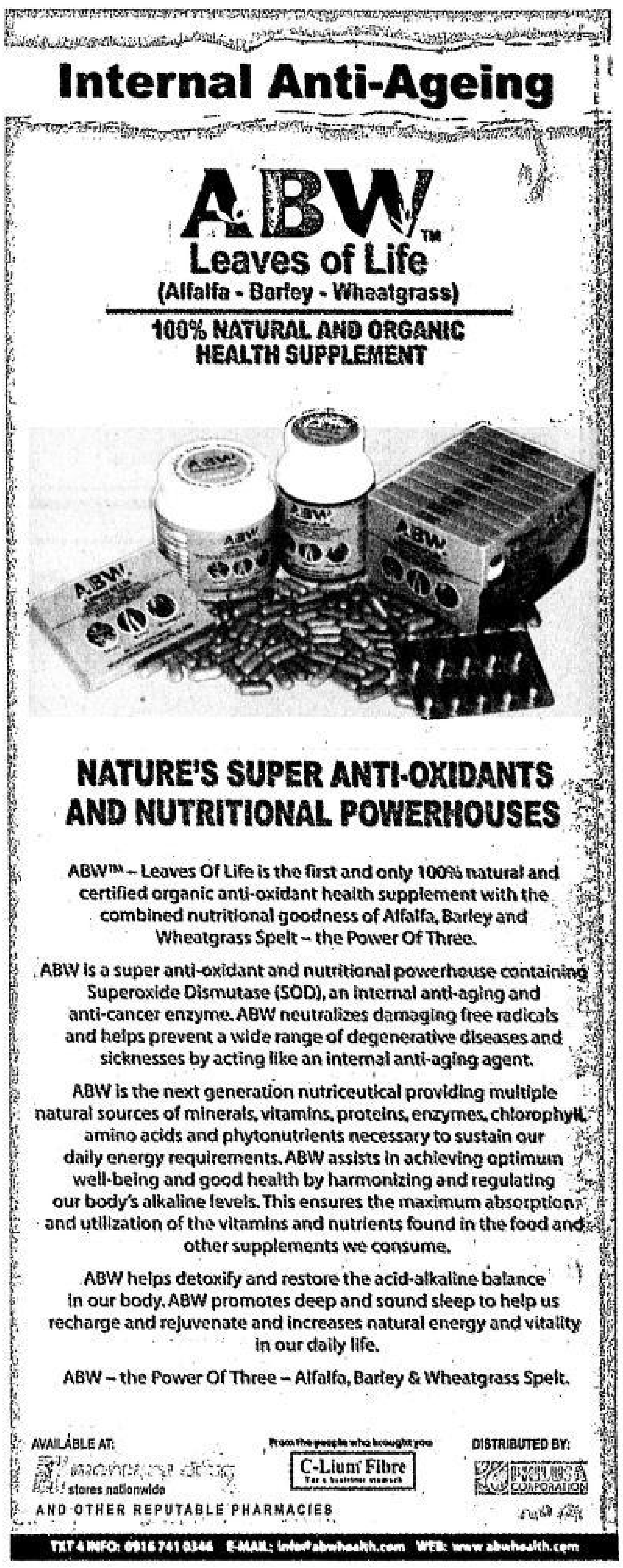

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'Nene': Vote wisely, not just for actors

By Christian V. Esguerra

WITH THE ADMINISTRATION fielding yet another actor in its ticket, Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. yesterday said it was time for Filipinos to vote more wisely.

"This time around, I think the people should render a more wise decision," he told reporters before joining opposition leaders for a luncheon meeting with former President Joseph Estrada in Greenhills, San Juan.

Pimentel was asked to comment on the candidacy of actor-director Cesar Montano who was drafted at the last minute in the administration's Team Unity.

His son, Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III is running for the Senate in the genuine opposition slate.

The elder Pimentel has spent time in the Senate with two actors since 2004—Senators Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Lito Lapid. He said some of them "did not perform well."

Revilla and Lapid both also ran and won in the administration slate.

Pimentel recounted Lapid's candid response to media questions about his qualifications for legislative work.

Asked what bills he had passed, Lapid purportedly replied: "*Hindi nga ako nakapasa ng* high school, *magpapasa pa ng* bills (I wasn't able to pass high school, how could I pass bills)?"

"I'm not belittling him [but] that's what he told me," Pimentel said.

But the veteran senator clarified that he was not generalizing about actors who may want to run for public office.

"Whether you're an actor or non-actor, it's your performance that will determine your fitness," he said.

In the case of Montano, Pimentel said that Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado might have worked for the actor's inclusion in the senatorial slate so they wouldn't have to clash for the top provincial post in the coming election.

"I won't rule out [Aumentado] as the one who principally worked it out... which was a good political move on his part," he said.

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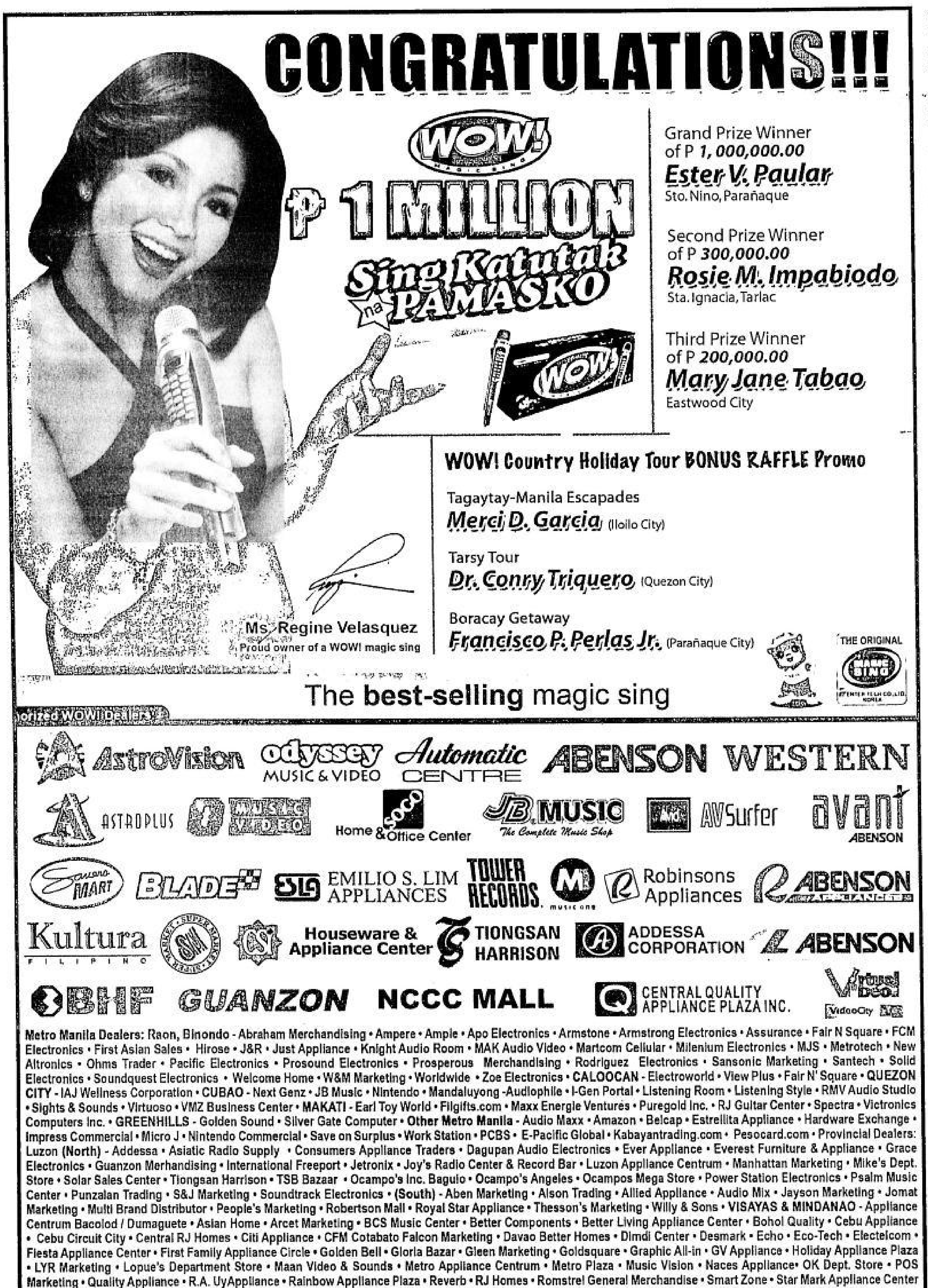
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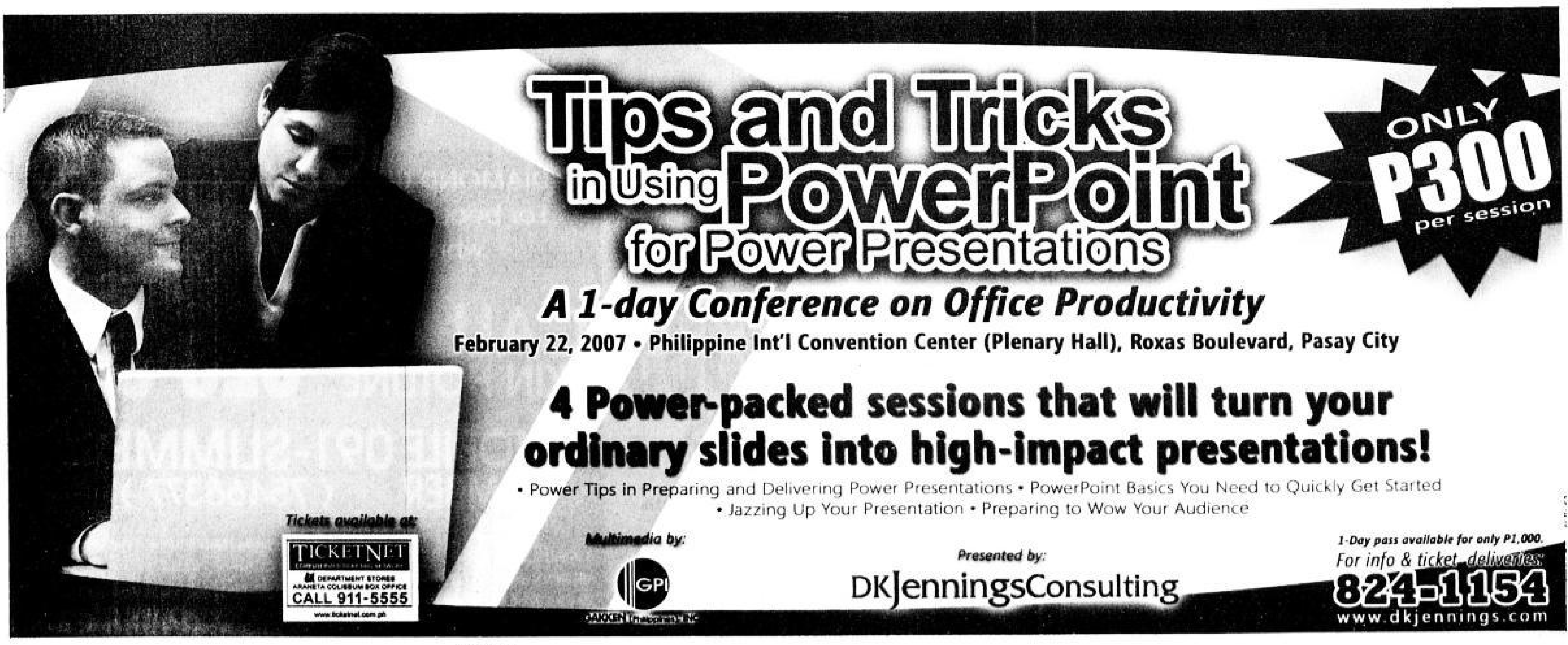
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Lapids, Pinedas to hold separate Team Unity rallies

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THERE WILL BE two separate pro-administration political events in Pampanga tomorrow because of disunity in President Macapagal-Arroyo's home province.

The buzz is that Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid of the ruling Lakas-CMD party did not invite Board Member Lilia Pineda, head of Arroyo's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), to join the rally at the Bren Z. Guiao Convention Center where the 12 senatorial candidates of the administration's Team Unity will be introduced here Tuesday.

Pineda, wife of alleged jueteng lord Bong Pineda, is running against Lapid's son Mark for the gubernatorial seat in Pampanga. Both belong to pro-administration parties.

Secretary Edgardo Pamintuan, coordinator of the Luzon Urban Beltway super region and a member of the Lakas-CMD national directorate, confirmed the decision of the Lapids to snub the Pinedas.

"Being the host and the highest elected Kapampangan, Lapid will call the shots. Participants and guests will be [selected] at his pleasure," Pamintuan told the INQUIRER on Sunday.

Pamintuan said President Arroyo would only endorse the members of Team Unity in the rally and not any of the local candidates in her home province.

Pineda yesterday confirmed that she had not been asked to attend the administration rally.

She would, instead, proceed with her plan to celebrate her 56th birthday with a Mass—concelebrated by San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto and 19 priests—at the St.Augustine parish in Lubao, followed by a breakfast at a nearby convent.

Ms Arroyo has been invited to the events in Lubao, her hometown.

Divided, the Lapids and the Pinedas were expected to use their respective events as a show of force. The Lapid-led rally plans to muster at least 10,000 people. The Pinedas said they expected 15,000 to attend the birthday Mass.

According to a Kampi source, Bong Pineda was behind the mobilization effort for the birthday of his wife, who has held various local posts.

The same source said Lilia Pineda "felt slighted" that the Lapids showed no respect for her being an incumbent board member and a Kampi leader.

In an interview during his own birthday bash on Feb. 16, Governor Lapid professed "respect" for his rival, but said they (the Pinedas) should stop "recycling" the alleged P500-million quarry scam against him and his father.

Pineda earlier said she was challenging the leadership of the Lapids in Pampanga because of alleged graft and inefficiency.

JDV says he's glad to have opposition

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AFTER RUNNING UNOPPOSED in the past elections, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. now faces two opponents from political parties allied with the administration in his own district in Pangasinan.

But De Venecia said he won't invoke the equity of the incumbent rule, which governs the selection of administration bets in other areas, because "it is lonesome without [an] opponent."

"It is about time I stop running unopposed. *Gusto ko naman may kalaban o may mga kalaban* (I want to have an opponent or opponents this time). I have run without opponents for three terms. It was very lonely," De Venecia, who represents the fourth district of Pangasinan, told reporters here on Saturday.

Dagupan City Mayor Benjamin Lim and former Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao, now administrator of the National Irrigation Administration, are reportedly eyeing a run for De Venecia's seat.

But De Venecia remained confident of winning. "When you have served the people well, when you have delivered more than what was expected, you are confident."

A recent poll survey commissioned by De Venecia showed him ahead of Lim by 66 percent if elections were held at the time of the survey period from Jan. 16 to Feb. 3.

The results showed De Venecia getting an overall rating of 83 percent against Lim's 17 percent.

The survey, conducted by the Metro Manila-based Proberz Research and Consultancy Inc., used a sample base of 585 respondents from this city and the towns of Mangaldan, San Jacinto, San Fabian and Manaoag.

Lomibao was not included in the survey since it was conducted before he announced his plan to run for Congress.

But Lim's candidacy was not yet definite.

In an earlier interview, Lim said he was torn between seeking reelection and running for representative.

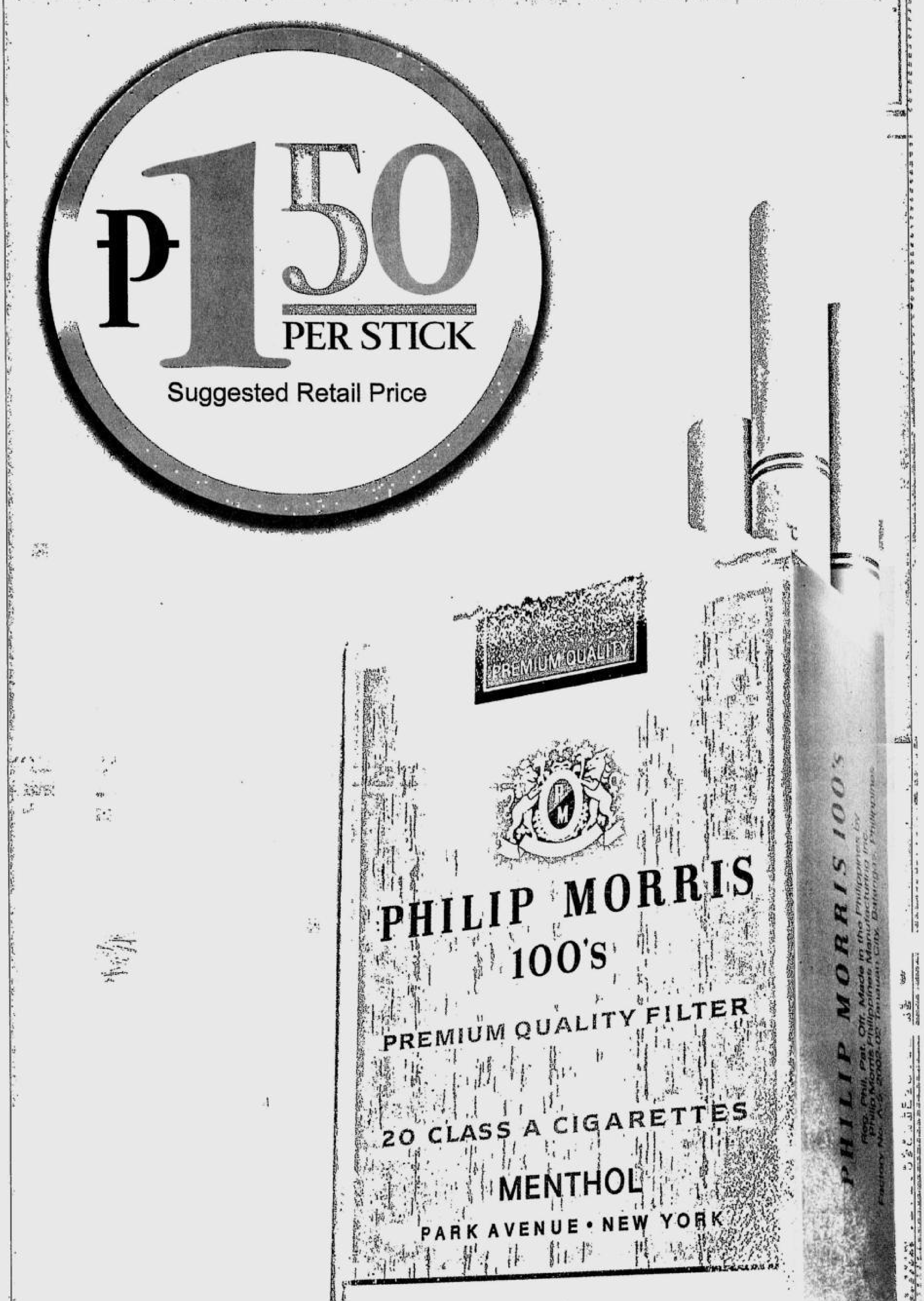
"I am faced with the appeal of Dagupan residents [to run for mayor] but also with the clamor of the people outside the city who want change. We are weighing things carefully," he said.

In the race for the governorship of Pangasinan, De Venecia said there was also a possibility that the province would be declared a free zone.

At least three candidates allied with the administration are eyeing the position. They are Jamie Eloise Agbayani, wife of outgoing Gov. Victor Agbayani; Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino, provincial chair of Lakas-CMD, and Rep. Amado Espino Jr., a member of Kampi, President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.

De Venecia said a national arbitration committee of the parties belonging to the administration coalition would try to resolve the issue.

"It will either be a free zone or one will be chosen and the rest will follow," he said.



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Militants brand movie on Abu Sayyaf US propaganda

By Alcuin Papa

A MILITANT GROUP YESTERDAY branded as "US propaganda" a Hollywood filmmaker's plan to produce a movie on the Abu Sayyaf bandit group.

"It's propaganda and a psy-war movie aimed at justifying the United States' unwanted, immoral and antipeople intervention in the domestic affairs of the country," said Gerry Albert Corpuz, information officer of Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya).

He said it will "promote the US war on terror and amplify its (US) tagging of the Philippines as the second front for US military aggression."

Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer—whose films credits include Armageddon and Pirates of the Caribbean—bought the screen rights to "Jihadists in Paradise," an article written by Mark Bowden for the Atlantic Monthly, said Variety.Com on its website.

Variety reported that Bowden, author of the best-selling book "Blackhawk Down," was chosen to write the screenplay for the movie.

Pamalakaya said the movie should also take into account the alleged collusion of the rebels with some Filipino military generals and political warlords.

"If Bruckheimer really wants an honest film on the Abu Sayyaf, he would also take into account the alleged collusion of the Abu Sayyaf with some top brass of the AFP and political warlords in the South, particularly the kidnap-for-ransom activities of the group where top military and local government officials were involved and received shares of ransom money from the bandits," Corpuz said.

He said Bruckheimer must include the fact that the Abu Sayyaf was "created" by the US to undermine the Moro people's quest for self-determination and divided and ruled them in the process.

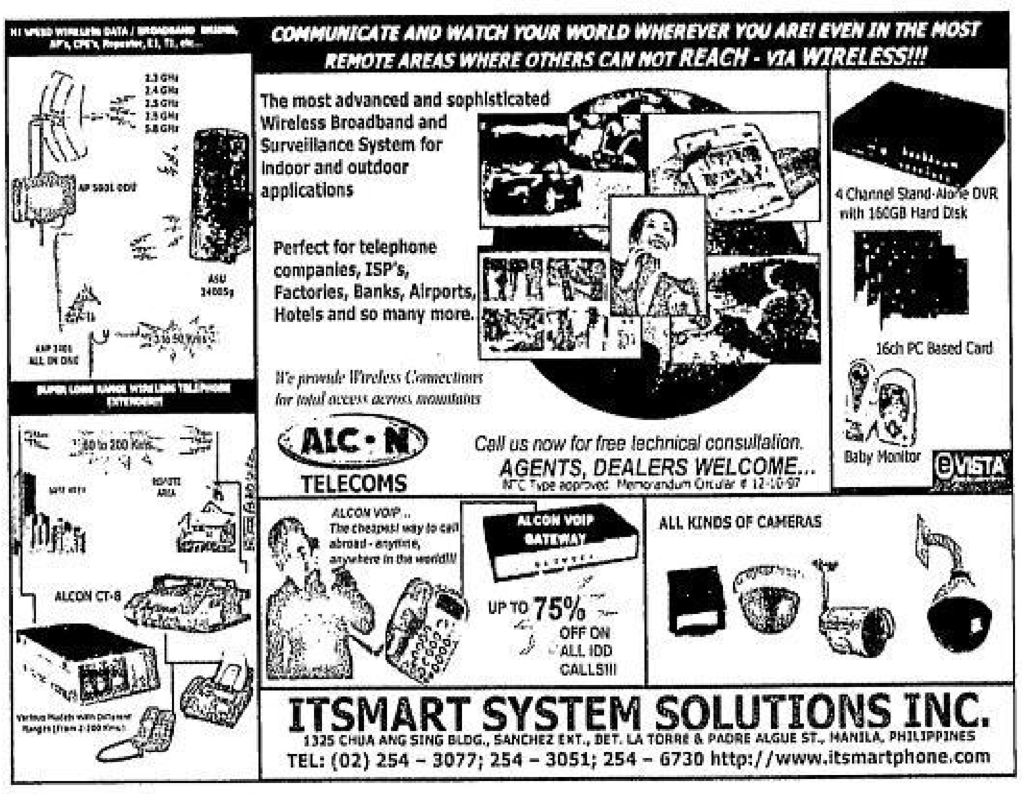
"We hope the Hollywood film would also take into account that the AFP had used the exploits of the Abu Sayyaf as a rallying point to justify bombings, intense military operations in Mindanao and yearly requests for a high military budget," Corpuz said.

"Jihadists in Paradise" details the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf and one of its leaders, Aldam Tilao.

Tilao put his group on the map in 2001 by sneaking by boat into a diving resort in Palawan and taking 20 hostages, including three Americans.

One of the Americans, Guillermo Sobero, was later beheaded. The other Americans, missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham, were rescued but Martin was killed by a stray bullet during the raid.

Tilao was eventually tracked down and killed after a long search by the CIA and Filipino military forces. *With Reuters, AFP*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The Republic of The Gambia celebrated its 42nd National Day yesterday calling to mind the state visit of President Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh (left) to the Philippines in 2005, shown here at Malacañang with President Macapagal-Arroyo and Gambia's honorary consul in Manila Agnes Huibonhua (right). Among other items, the Philippines hopes to market virgin coconut oil in Gambia to complement President Jammeh's herbal healing program for HIV and asthma patients in his country.

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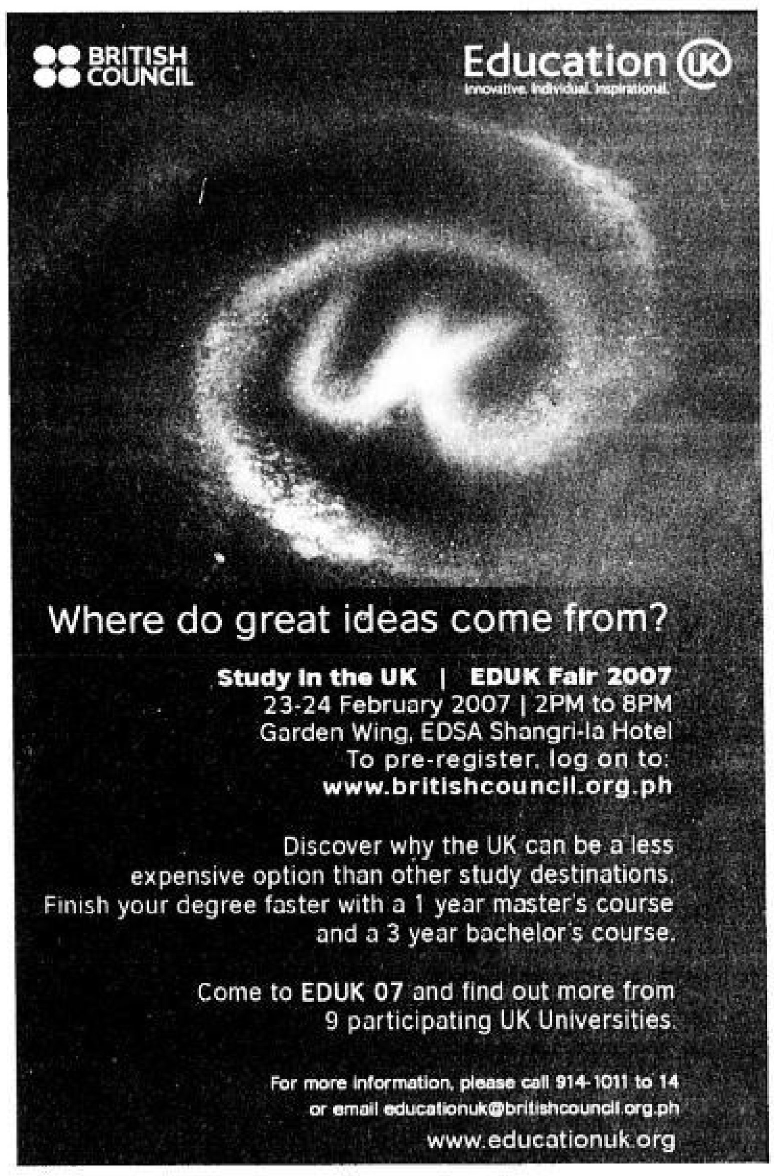
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US to focus on good works

AMERICAN TROOPS WILL REPAIR SCHOOLS, roads and undertake other civic projects as part of the annual joint "Balikatan" exercises launched Sunday in Mindanao aimed at fighting grass roots support for the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group, United States military officials said.

While past drills had involved up to 5,000 US soldiers, only about 400 were on hand for the Feb. 18-March 4 maneuvers that will focus on humanitarian projects on Jolo island, the officials said.

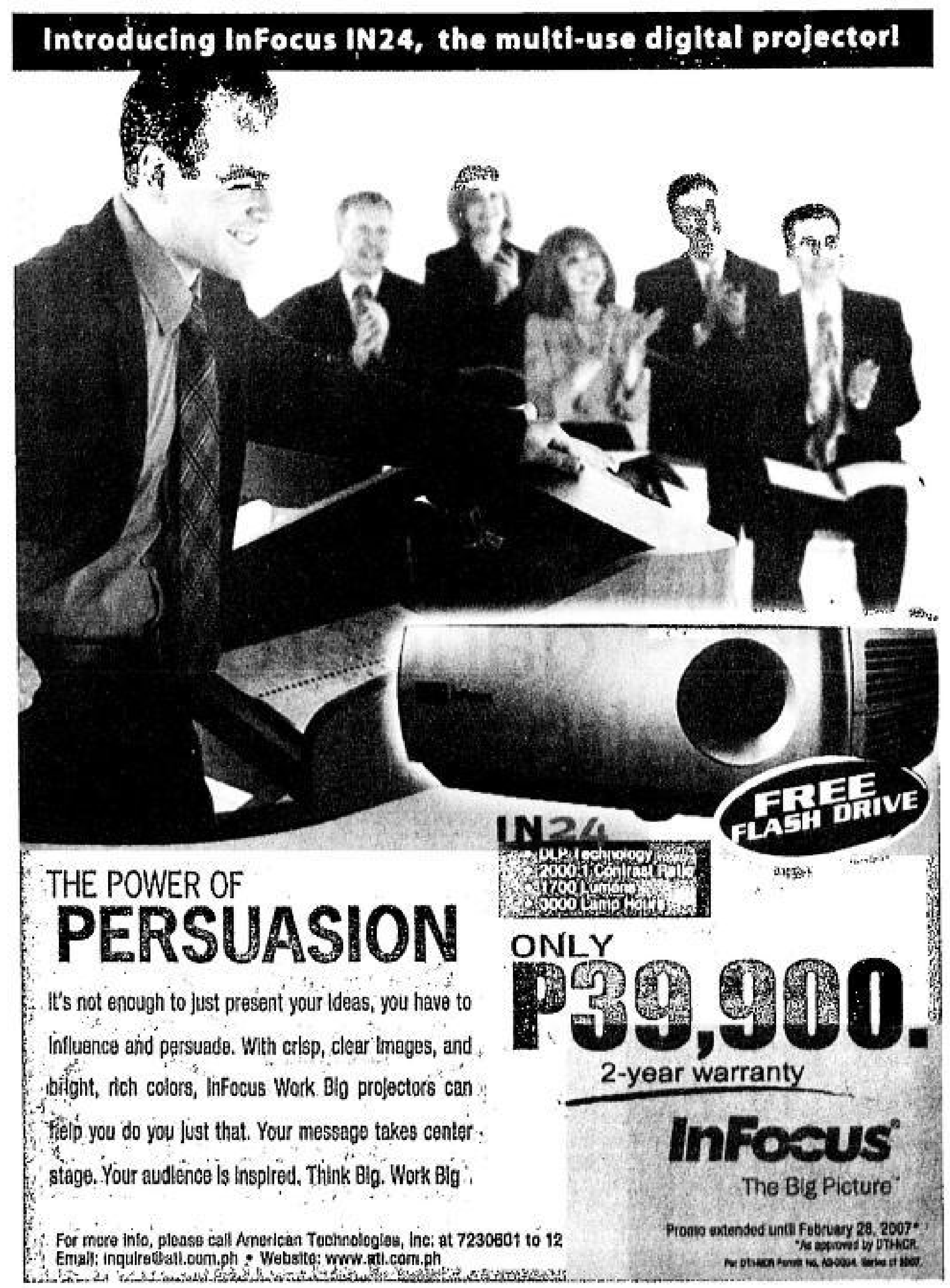
"We know that terrorists here get some support from the local population, but that level of support continues to decrease with more humanitarian projects," said Maj. John Redfield, a spokesperson for the US contingent.

"We are seeing more and more people come forward with information against the terrorists, and certainly we encourage people to continue to do that," he told The Associated Press.

He also cited recent battlefield successes for declining support for the Abu Sayyaf, who authorities say number about 400 on the predominantly Muslim island of Jolo.

Aside from helping repair a 2.5-mile road, the American troops will renovate school buildings and clinics on Jolo. In nearby Tawi-Tawi province, US troops will help build a pier and a boat ramp.

US troops will also offer medical assistance in central Mindanao, including Makilala town, where a bomb attack by suspected Muslim guerrillas killed eight people last year, Redfield said. *AP*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Military sets poll deadline

THE MILITARY WILL defeat the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group before the country goes to the polls in May, a senior military commander said Sunday.

"Outnumbered by military forces 10 to one, the Abu Sayyaf will be defeated before the midterm elections," Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, commander for western Mindanao, told reporters.

He said the military had more than 10,000 troops on the ground on the island of Sulu and that it was only a "matter of time" before the Abu Sayyaf was defeated.

"Before the elections, we will get the high-value targets," Cedo told reporters.

"We will maintain the momentum ... Our troops are more than enough," Cedo was quoted as saying on the INQUIRER website. *AFP*

Comelec lists common areas for posters

By Jerome Aning

CANDIDATES CANNOT NOW CLAIM IGNORANCE as an excuse when they post campaign materials where they are not allowed to do so.

The Commission on Elections' National Capital Region Office has listed 578 "common poster areas" in the 15 cities and two municipalities that comprise Metro Manila.

The poster areas, both old and new ones, were enumerated in a memorandum submitted to the Comelec en banc on Feb. 15 by Director Michael Dioneda, Comelec-NCR officer in charge. The list was published on Friday by the Comelec's education and information department in its blog (http://comelec.wordpress.com).

Candidates may put up their posters on the gates, walls and fences of barangay halls, public markets and government offices. They may also put them up in public plazas, public schools, health centers, tricycle terminals as well as covered courts and open spaces and vacant lots.

Manila's first congressional district has the most number of common poster areas—135. Pateros only has three.

On Feb. 14, the commission en banc formally issued a resolution deputizing barangay officials, including *tanods* (watchmen) to help enforce the rules on campaign material posting.

Resolution No. 7823 gives barangay officials and tanods the authority to tear down and remove campaign material posted in public places outside common poster areas, remove campaign materials that do not follow the prescribed sizes, arrest people caught in the act of posting unlawful election propaganda, and make reports on the actions they had taken.

The Comelec has instructed Interior Secretary Rolando Puno to take the necessary steps to enforce the resolution. In addition, Puno was given "the authority to impose proper administrative sanctions, if warranted."

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. earlier warned candidates to strictly follow the rules on posting campaign materials. Under election rules, posters should not exceed two-by-three feet and should only be put up in designated areas.

CARP excludes livestock farms

THE SUPREME COURT HAS EXCLUDED livestock farms from the coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

In a 24-page decision, the tribunal upheld the decision of the Court of Appeals which exempted a 350-hectare farm in San Narciso, Quezon, owned by respondent Vicente K. Uy from CARP coverage.

The high court ruling penned by Justice Romeo J. Callejo Sr. reiterated the unconstitutionality of Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Administrative Order No. 9 which sought to "regulate livestock farms by excluding them in the coverage of agrarian reform and prescribing a maximum retention limit for their ownership."

The DAR exceeded its authority in issuing the AO as it had "no power to regulate livestock farms which have been exempted by the Constitution from the coverage of agrarian reform," the court said.

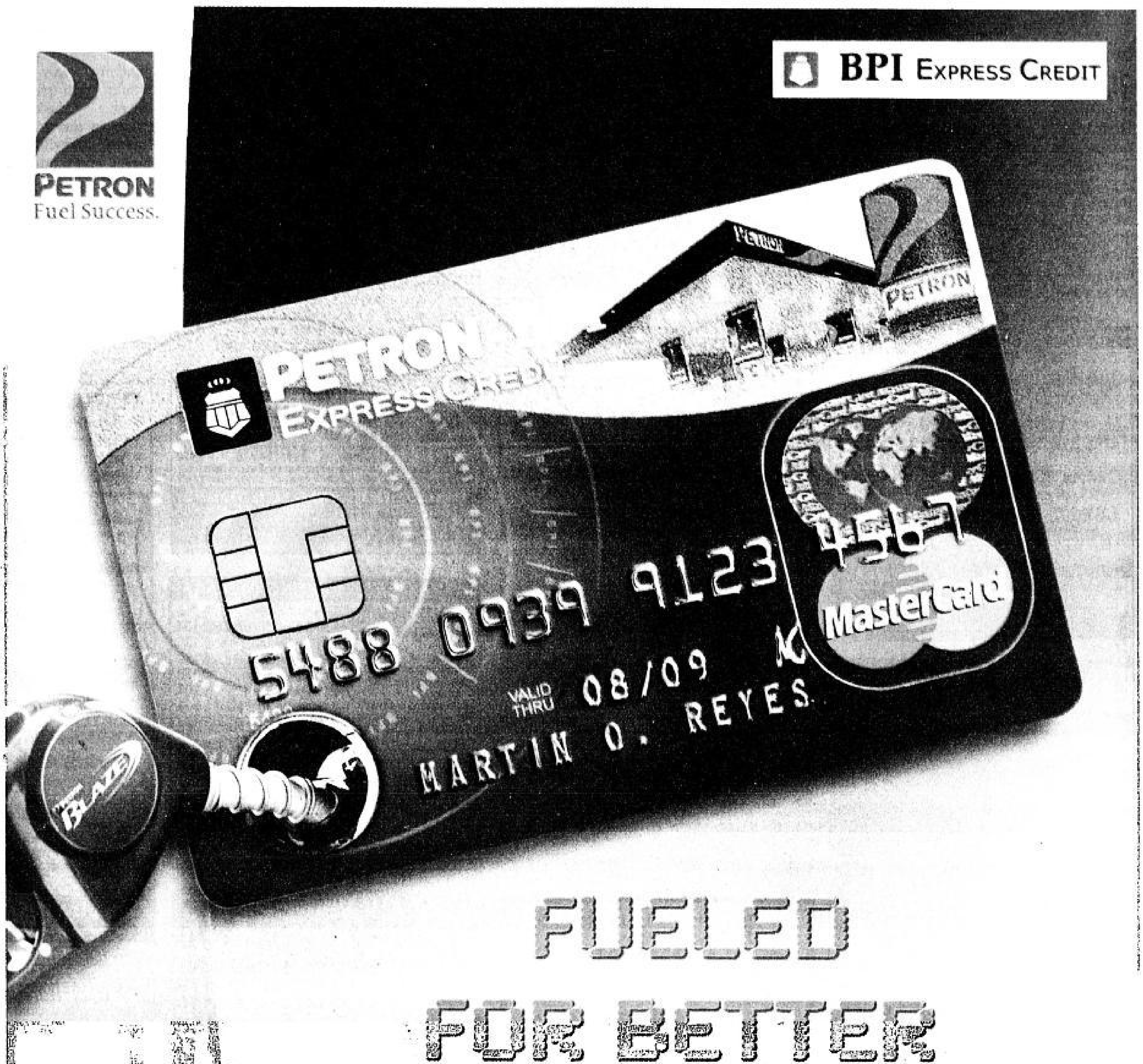
The high court added that a perusal of the deliberations of the 1986 Constitutional Commission confirms the intent to exclude from agrarian reform all lands used exclusively for livestock, swine and poultry-raising which are classified as "industrial" activities.

The case arose when farmers who occupied portions of Uy's property asked the DAR to declare them its owner-beneficiaries.

Uy then filed an Application for Exclusion, alleging that the property had been used exclusively for livestock-raising for several years prior to the date of effectivity of Republic Act No. 6657 (Rules and Regulations Governing the Exclusion of Agricultural Lands used for Livestock, Poultry and Swine-Raising from the coverage of CARP).

The DAR issued an order, which was affirmed by the Office of the President, exempting only a portion of the property. But the CA reversed the decision of the Office of the President and declared that the entire property was exempt from agrarian reform coverage.

Tina G. Santos



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'Mar' backs cheaper drugs bill

IT'S THE LAST chance to bring down drug prices in the Philippines.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II yesterday called on the House of Representatives to approve in today's special session a Palace-certified measure to bring down the cost of quality medicines.

Roxas, who co-sponsored a similar bill in the Senate with Sen. Pia Cayetano, said this was the closest the country had come to enacting a law that would drastically lower medicine prices in the face of intense lobbying by major multinational drug firms.

"When one is unable to prolong his or her life because medicines are priced too high, yet are available in other countries at a much lower cost, one is within reason to ask why it has taken so long for government to correct this social injustice. But this takes a great deal of political will, and I am hoping that during the two-day session we can demonstrate to our people that such political will does exist," Roxas said.

The President has certified the medicine price bill as urgent but only the Senate version had been passed (with a vote of 20-0 in favor) before Congress adjourned last week. The House bill got bogged down on questions of quorum and opposition from a few congressmen.

The Senate bill proposes to amend the Intellectual Property Code that would allow companies to develop their own generic versions of patented medicines (dubbed as "early working" principle or the "Bolar provision" in other countries like the US); allowing the private sector to handle parallel importation of drugs, and allow the government to compulsorily license others to manufacture medicines as an immediate response to public health demands, or do it by itself directly.

The Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) has maintained that passing the bill would not only weaken intellectual property rights protection, it could open the floodgates to fake drugs entering the country. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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2N SHENZHEN+1N MACAU	$ 169	5D4N HKG+MACAU+SHENZHEN	$ 308
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B2-3	Beijing, Tianjin, Chengde, Qinhuangdao 5 - 6 Days	Tues, Thur, Sun
C1B-6	Beijing, Shanghai 6 Days	3/30 to 4/07 Daily
C1B6T	Beijing w/express train to Shanghai 6 Days	
H1	Shanghai 3 - 4 Days	Tues, Thur, Fri, Sun
H2-3	Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou 4 - 6 Days	3/30 to 4/07 Daily
C1A	Beijing, Xian, Guilin 6 - 8 Days	Tuesday
C1B	Beijing, Shanghai, Guilin 6 - 8 Days	Tuesday, Sunday
C1C	Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, Guilin 6 - 10 Days	Tue, Thur, Sun
G	Guangzhou (Canton), Zhaoqing 3 - 5 Days	Tuesday, Friday
M	Xiamen, Quanzhou, Fuzhou 3 - 5 Days	Friday

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06Apr-08Apr	3D/2N	319	379

Singapore	05Apr-08Apr	4D/3N	265
Bangkok	04Apr-08Apr	5D/4N	269
Kuala Lumpur	05Apr-08Apr	4D/3N	285

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Apr 5-8 4D/3N P11650 | Apr 20-22 3D/2N P9000

SUMMER WEEKEND BLOCKINGS for HONGKONG
Apr 19 - 22 248 | Apr 28 - May 1 258
Apr 20-22, May 10-13/17-20/24-27 218
Apr 29 - May 1 219 | May 3-6 235
May 4-6/11-13/18-20/25-27 185

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2N Shenzhen + 1N Macau	169	1N Macau + 2N HKG + 2N Shenzhen	288
1N Shenzhen + 1N HKG + 1N Macau	189	1N Shenzhen + 3N Beijing + 1N Macau	339
2N HKG + 1N Shenzhen	199	1N Shenzhen + 2N SHA + 3N Beijing + 1N Macau	399
HKG Free & Easy 3D/2N	148	Singapore 3N	189
Kuala Lumpur 3N	155	Tri-City (Singapore/Malaysia/Indonesia) 4D/3N	235
Bangkok 3N	163	Jakarta 3N	248
Kuala + Genting Highlands 4D/3N	188	Singapore w/ Malaysia overland 6D/5N	383

HONGKONG DISNEYLAND

2N Hongkong w/ Disney Day Tour	218
1N Hongkong + 1N Disneyland	269
1N Macau + 1N HKG + 1N Shenzhen w/ Disney Day Tour	279
2N Hongkong + 1N Disneyland	289
1N Macau + 1N HKG + 2N Shenzhen w/ Disney Day Tour	299

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Saigon	3D/2N	209	Guam	3D/2N	353
Macau	4D/3N	238	Palau	3D/2N	379
Taipei	3D/2N	338	Sydney	4D/3N	730

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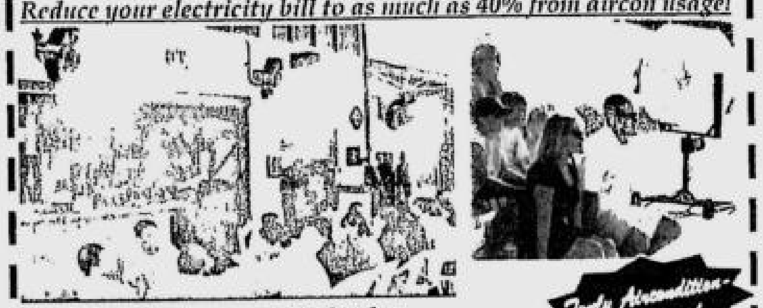
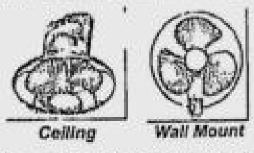
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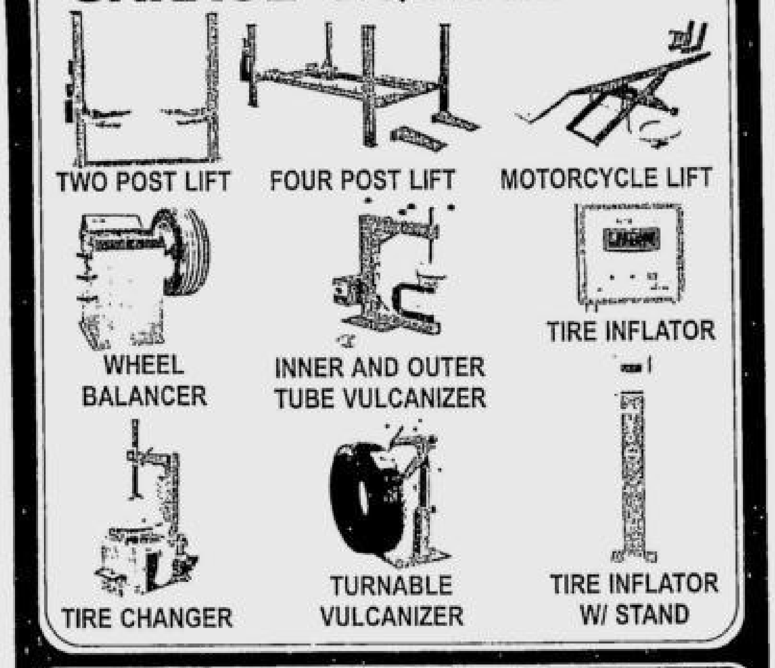
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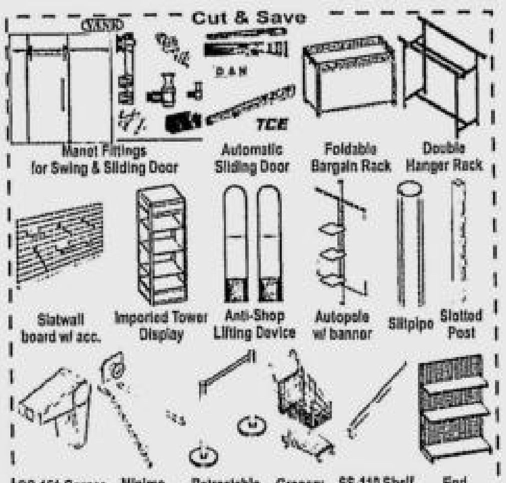
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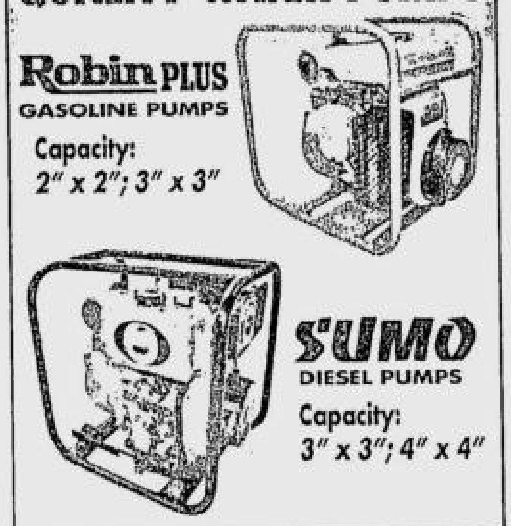
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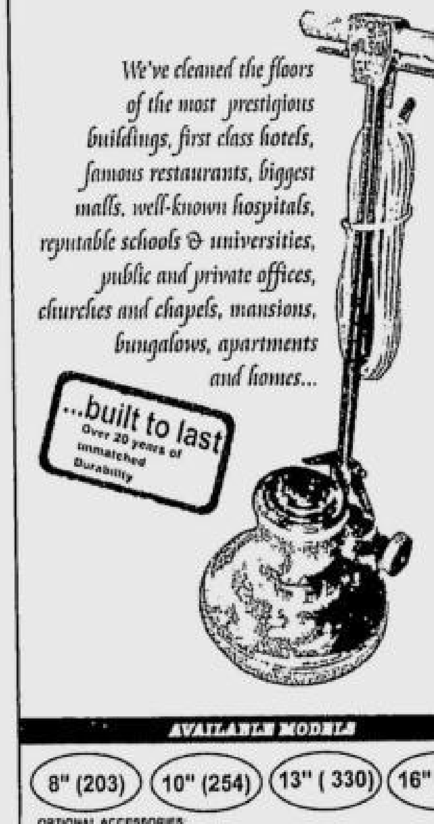
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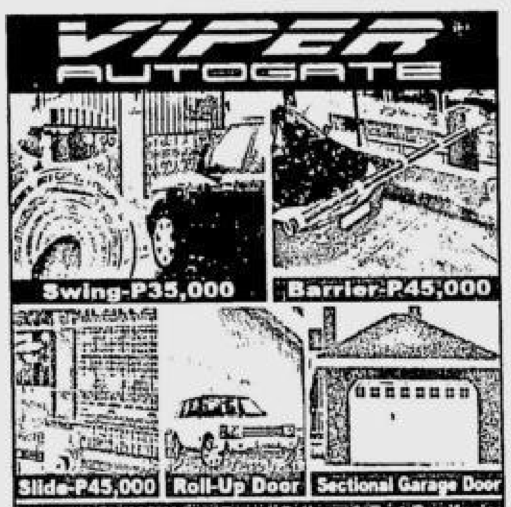
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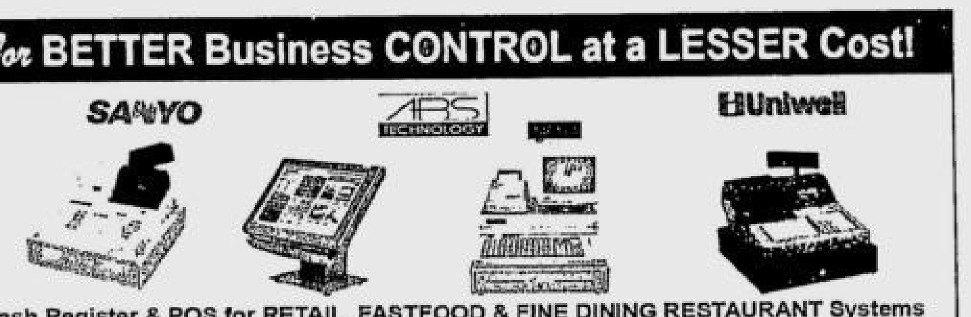
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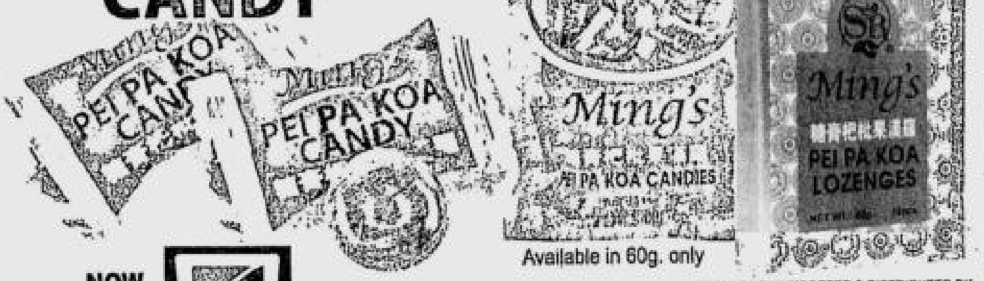
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For some Chinoys, new year brings little promise

By Allison W. Lopez

AS MOST CHINOYS WELCOMED the Year of the Pig yesterday with feasts and fireworks, Norma Go-Baladhay sat on the steps of the marbled mausoleum where she and her son lived.

She was waiting for her *"amo's"* gifts of *tikoy* and *ampao* so that she and her son could also celebrate the New Year, even in a humble way.

Welcoming the Chinese New Year with extravagance may be typical for most Chinese-Filipinos, but for Norma, a 51-year-old caretaker at the Chinese Cemetery in Blumentritt, Manila, it was just another day in the Chinese calendar.

It was almost noon and no one had come just yet. She felt a little down that none of the owners of the mausoleums under her care had shown up.

"Naturally, we are waiting for people to at least give us something," she said in Filipino. "When they come, sometimes they give us P150. But if they are superstitious, they don't come."

Baladhay was referring to some Chinoys' belief that it's unlucky to go to the cemetery on New Year's Day. She said that last year was better—her amos (employers) arrived with groceries for her.

If no one arrived, Baladhay and her 23-year-old son would only have day-old rice sprinkled with soy sauce for their Chinese New Year lunch. Her son was a sophomore computer science student who had stop schooling for lack of money.

A Catholic prays to Buddha

The single mother of two earns about P20,000 a year, or P53 a day, for keeping 20 mausoleums clean. Her eldest is already married but remains jobless.

Baladhay's browned skin covered in ragged clothes is typical of a Chinese-Filipino mestiza, but the shape of her eyes are telling. Her Chinese father used to be a mausoleum contractor but he died six years ago. Her 78-year-old Filipino mother is still in her care.

She used to take odd jobs to make ends meet but said she was getting too old for it.

Even if she is a Catholic, Baladhay has no qualms about asking for blessings from the small Buddha figurine on her makeshift altar.

Life in Chinatown

"That is Papa," she said, pointing to the Buddha.

At the marble altar, she prays for her sickly mother and for life to get better for her kids.

"I believe in luck but, of course, hard work is also needed," she said.

Another Chinoy who celebrated the Chinese New Year humbly was Jaime Wong, who walks around his Chinatown neighborhood with a cane.

He didn't look all that old but he already has 14 grandchildren.

Asked how he made his living, Wong mumbled something vague about sidecars.

Persevering people

"I really don't do anything. I just stay with my grandchildren," he said, comforting one of them who was frightened by firecrackers exploding nearby.

Half-Chinese, Wong had married early but separated from his wife. He was stricken with polio but it didn't deter him from working when he was in Taiwan in the 1990s.

He now lives with his eldest son's family in their rented home on Alonzo St.

"The Chinese are persevering," he said. "Even if they have money, they are not ashamed to sell stuff on sidewalks."

Indeed, in many sidewalk stalls and shops, young Chinoy urbanites help man the shops on busy days.

Ingenuity is another trait Wong admires about the Chinese.

"Before, they sold used bottles. Now, they are the ones buying used bottles; now they even have factories making bottles," he said. "Some used to sell *taho*; now they have shops making *taho*."

"When it comes to thriftiness, they are really thrifty," Wong said. He said business magnate Henry Sy started out as a poor man.

But being thrifty is not enough to make one rich, he added.

SOME CHINOYS celebrate the Chinese New Year with feasts and fireworks. Others mark it with prayers, such as members of associations in Chinatown which help out needy Chinoys. RYAN LIM

When Chinoys need help, many groups are willing to provide support, he said.

Family ties

He revealed that Chinese-Filipinos have "associations" that help fellow Chinoys bearing the same surnames.

"If you are a Wong, there is a Wong association. If you are a Lee, a Lee association. If you cannot afford to pay for your schooling, you just go to those associations."

The concept is typically Chinese, who place a strong value on family ties, Wong said.

He said taipans like Lucio Tan, John Gokongwei and Sy donate millions to these associations. On their part, the "poor" ones, only give what they can yearly.

These "associations" hold office in Blumentritt, Wong said.

"But before the Chinese help, they make sure who they will help. If you are lazy, you get nothing. They only give to the truly deserving," he said.

Later in the morning, Wong went to the temple to make an incense offering.

He has a simple wish for the coming year—that none of his grandchildren get sick and that his family, now separated, would be united again.

Aquino, Cayetano can't shake off their namesakes

OPPOSITION SENATORIAL CANDIDATE Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III has asked the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to cancel the certificate of candidacy (COC) of his cousin Theodore, another senatorial aspirant with the same surname.

The only son of the late Beningno "Ninoy" Aquino and former President Corazon Aquino filed over the weekend a petition to "deny due course and cancel the certificate of candidacy of Theodore M. Aquino," who registered with the Comelec as an independent senatorial candidate.

Theodore, a civil engineer and environment management specialist, is the son of Claudio Aquino, a first cousin of Ninoy Aquino, and a grandson of guerrilla general Francisco Macabulos. President of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association in America, he said he represents the US-based Global Filipino Coalition.

Nuisance candidate

But Noynoy Aquino said allowing Theodore to run for senator in the May 14 elections could cause "serious damage and prejudice" to him considering that they both had the same surnames. It would "unnecessarily create confusion among the electorate," he added.

Representative Aquino called Ted "a nuisance candidate who has no bona fide intention to run for public office."

The congressman said that based on the public pronouncements of Ted Aquino, his only intention for seeking a Senate seat is "to test" Republic Act No. 9225, or the Dual Citizenship Law.

And also "to fulfill a promise to his alleged uncle, Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr.", continued Noynoy, taking a potshot not just at Ted's motives but also at his legitimacy.

'Kuya Ted'

In response to Noynoy's petition, Ted Aquino sent the INQUIRER an e-mail, stressing that he was willing to campaign "on the strength of the Kuya Ted name." He said he was willing to give all the "Aquino" votes to Noynoy.

"The name Kuya Ted now symbolizes the goal of good governance greatly sought after by the global Filipino community, its onshore families and friends, and all Filipinos who share the same ideals," he wrote.

Ted Aquino filed his candidacy on Jan. 15, accompanied by former UP president and constitutionalist Jose Abueva. The Global Filipino Coalition is led by banker Victor Barrios.

Cayetano's woes

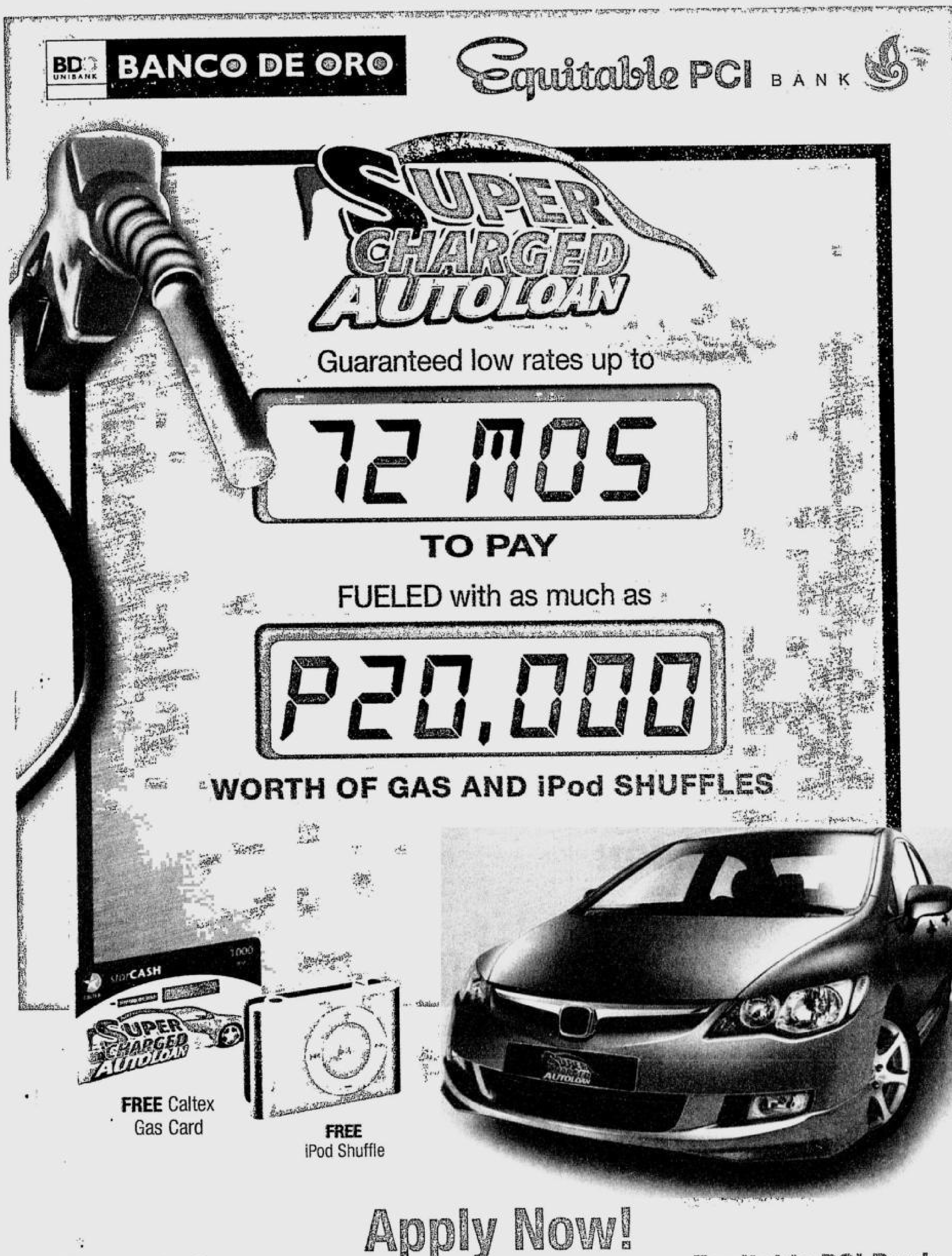
Meanwhile, Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday likewise expressed disappointment over the Commission on Elections' decision not to dismiss Joselito Pepito Cayetano aka "Peter Cayetano" when it weeded out nuisance candidates from the official list of senatorial bets.

Cayetano said it was unfortunate that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos stood by the decision of the commission's legal department to let Joselito Pepito continue his senatorial candidacy because he was endorsed by a political party.

Joselito Pepito is part of the senatorial slate of the once powerful Kilusang Bagong Lipunan of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos that is now led by lawyer Oliver Lozano.

Cayetano has filed his own petition with the Comelec to disqualify Joselito Pepito.

Nikko Dizon and Norman Bordadora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Naia cops doubt solon's story

By Tarra Quismundo

DESPITE HIS AVOWED DENIALS, AIRPORT security officials are not buying the claim of Laguna Rep. Danton Bueser (3rd District) that the bullets and a pistol magazine found in his carry-on bag as he was about to board a US-bound plane Friday night were not his and must have been planted.

Airport security chief Angel Atutubo said yesterday that Bueser's version of the events—that someone intentionally placed the banned items in his shoulder bag while he wasn't looking—could not have happened given the strict inspection and security monitoring at all airport facilities.

"His statement that [the bullets and magazine] were planted, that's not true because nobody would do that in the airport … in the three layers of security checks at the airport that could not have passed unnoticed," Atutubo said.

Bueser was intercepted at the third and final security check at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Centennial Terminal's north wing at 9:20 p.m. Friday, while he was about to board Philippine Airlines Flight PR 114 bound for San Francisco. The legislator was taken to the 1st Police Center for Aviation Security (PCAS) for investigation .

"What happened just shows that our security system is effective, because he was intercepted. Now, we are checking the X-rays where he passed undetected, and if it's the machines that had a defect, we will replace the machines. Or if it was the personnel [manning the machines], then we will replace the people," said the official.

But Bueser, who was later released to the custody of a fellow congressman, insisted that the 20 cal. 380 bullets and the empty magazine were not his.

He claimed that the items were likely placed in his hand-carried bag when he left it to go to the toilet while awaiting the call for boarding.

"That's what they say, with the number of people entering the airport, that's not impossible," said Bueser over the phone yesterday.

Senior Supt. Efren Labiang, 1st PCAS chief, yesterday said investigators were still looking into the incident, including Bueser's claim that the ammunition was somebody else's.

"That's normal, that's his allegation. But how could they be planted when he was holding his bag at the time (he was apprehended)?" Labiang said, adding there had never been an instance at the airport where illegal items were planted in the baggage of a departing passenger.

Bueser had said he was surprised at what police found in his bag as he had passed two security checks prior to the final check, and both X-ray machines detected nothing. He said "a syndicate" or somebody trying "to sabotage" his political career may have been behind it.

"I'm waiting for the result of the investigation. Of course [I will submit myself]. Nobody's above the law," the legislator told the INQUIRER.

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1st Reading: Sir 1:1-10
Gospel: Mark 9:14-29

When Jesus came to the place where they had left the disciples, they saw many people around and some teachers of the Law arguing with them. When the people saw Jesus, they were astonished and ran to greet him.

He asked, "What are you arguing about with them?" A man answered him from the crowd, "Master, I brought my son to you for he has a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit seizes him, it throws him down and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth and becomes stiff all over. I asked your disciples to drive the spirit out, but they could not."

Jesus replied, "You faithless people. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him.

As soon as the spirit saw Jesus, it shook and convulsed the boy who fell on the ground and began rolling about, foaming at the mouth. Then Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "From childhood. And it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "Why do you say: 'If you can?' All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe, but help the little faith I have."

Jesus saw that the crowd was increasing rapidly, so he ordered the evil spirit, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you: Leave the boy and never enter him again." The evil spirit shook and convulsed the boy and with a terrible shriek came out. The boy lay like a corpse and people said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him and the boy stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive out the spirit?" And he answered, "Only prayer can drive out this kind, nothing else."

Commentary

Wisdom is from God and it is the Lord who knows all wisdom and it is the Lord who created her and poured her forth upon all his works, upon all of us, lavishing her upon his friends. It is fear of the Lord that warms the heart, gives gladness, joy, and length of days. Fear of the Lord is a gift (confirmation) that allows us to fear disobeying God and destroying his creation, more than fearing anyone or anything on earth.

A man brings his child to Jesus to expel a demon from him, because the disciples can't. Jesus speaks with the father, talking with him and letting him plead on his child's behalf. And then Jesus tells him that everything is possible to someone who trusts. By word, Jesus commands the tormentor to leave the child. Then Jesus takes the child by the hand and raises him up. Jesus says, "You must have wisdom to know what can only be driven out by prayer." And the man's prayer was simple, "I do believe! Help my lack of trust!" Let us pray.

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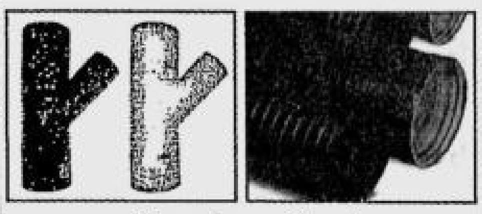

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OPINION

Visa realities

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, WE WOULDN'T NEED TO send our nursing graduates abroad, especially to the United States, to find a job commensurate with their skill and knowledge. While we should all work to make that ideal state of affairs a reality, we should also be ready for—in fact, we should fully come to terms with—the less than ideal conditions that govern the nursing profession in the Philippines.

EDITORIAL

One such condition is the profession's current dependence on work in hospitals and clinics abroad, especially in the United States. In the last several years, the wave of registered nurses leaving the country for assignments in foreign shores has turned into a tsunami. Even if the national government were to try to stop the flood, like King Canute it would quickly discover the limit of its considerable powers. The best it can do, in simplified terms, is first to ensure that enough nurses remain in the country to man our own hospitals and clinics; and second, to provide support to the nurses who are hired abroad.

We are happy to note that, unlike most other overseas Filipino workers, the Filipino nurse enjoys the privilege of legally immigrating with her family; social costs are still incurred, but these are mitigated—subsidized, so to speak—by a host country's open-minded immigration policy. We also note, with a quickening sense of hope, that the new policy of medical tourism is already making a difference in the country's best hospitals. This can only lead to better jobs for more nurses here at home.

But there is no denying the outbound orientation that now marks the nursing profession. That is why the decision of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing in the United States to designate Manila as a new site for the administration of licensure examinations is welcome and bracing news.

That is also why the decision by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools to deny the (US) VisaScreen certificate to Filipino nurses who passed the June 2006 board exams is deeply worrying.

On the CGFNS website, the first Frequently Asked Question is answered in this manner: "The passage of the NCLEX or the CGFNS Examination is only one of four general VisaScreen requirements. Under normal circumstances, passage of either examination will fulfill this particular requirement. However, the license of those Philippine Nurses who passed only the June 2006 Exam has been determined to be 'not comparable' to a US nursing license due to the fact that the licensing examination given by the PRC was compromised. Therefore, the VisaScreen certificate cannot be issued, as required by US immigration law and its implementing regulations to those participating in only this compromised examination."

The CGFNS is referring, of course, to the leakage scandal that rocked the June 2006 examinations. An indecisive response from the Arroyo administration helped lead to a protracted legal battle and eventually a Solomonic ruling. With the latest CGFNS announcement, however, a retake for all nurses who took the June 2006 exams, at least those who wish to work in the United States, seems to be in order.

Unfortunately, much of the initial reaction to the CGFNS decision has been spectacularly beside the point. "It's really unfair because the Supreme Court has already arrived at a decision," said Renato Aquino, president of the Alliance of New Nurses. "The high court has already ruled against the retaking of the exams due to lack of evidence."

Well, yes. But the CGFNS was careful to limit the scope of its own decision. "The CGFNS decision to deny the VisaScreen to the June 2006 passers of the Philippine Nursing Licensure Examination relates only to US immigration law."

In other words, the Supreme Court ruling remains fully applicable to Philippine practice. But it cannot be, it was not meant to be, a substitute for another country's requirements. The best it could have done was assuage CGFNS concerns about the integrity of the June 2006 exams. Unfortunately, those concerns about a "compromised" test remain.

By all means, the Arroyo administration should act decisively and appeal to the CGFNS to reconsider its decision. But, at the same time, it must already prepare those who want to work in the United States for the probability of a distasteful but necessary retake. It is bitter medicine, and we must swallow it.

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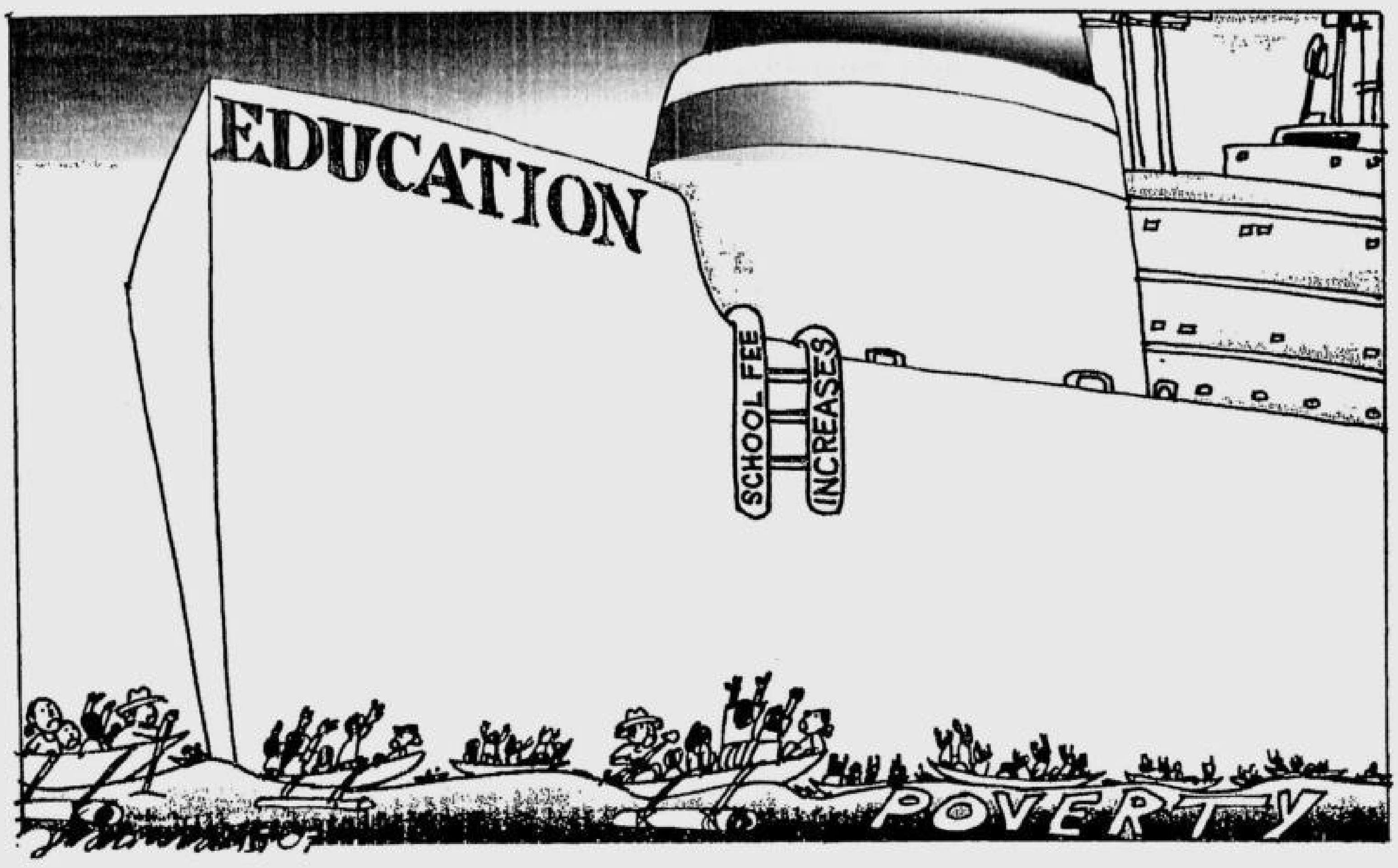


Two more shady deals by Napocor

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WILL SHADY GOVERNMENT DEALS NEVER cease? Hardly has an exposed onerous deal been investigated than new ones already surface.

The latest to come to light may not come as a surprise since it was forged by the National Power Corp. which is notorious for this type of deals. The Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) is supposed to make Napocor a thing of the past. The law mandates that all of Napocor's assets be sold and that the power industry be privately owned and opened to competition—so that the cost of power will be lower. But Napocor refuses to go quietly. It is still secretly and illegally concluding contracts that would increase power rates for consumers and make its officials rich.

Napocor's latest brainchild comes in the form of marketing contracts—one with the Lanao Hydro Development Corp. (LHDC); the other with the joint venture of Korean Electric Power Corp. Philippines (Kephilco) and Salcon Power Corp.

In its contract with LHDC, Napocor through its president, Cyril del Callar, will sell to distribution utilities and other private investors the generated electricity of the proposed Agus 3 power project at P4.32/kWh (the present rate approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission for Mindanao is a little more than P2/kWh) for a 10-year period starting 2011. The Agus 3 project has yet to be built by LHDC in Mindanao and is not expected to be operational until 2011.

By acting as a selling agent of LHDC, Napocor will get a commission of 12 centavos/kWh or P120 million a year. Is that allowed by the Epira? Definitely not. The agreement is a virtual power supply contract which the Napocor is prohibited from entering.

What's more, Napocor allowed LHDC to double the power rates without the approval of the ERC. This means, consumers with an average consumption of 200 kWh per month will pay an additional P240 per month. The P120-million commission that Napocor will get will also come from the consumers.

In the Kephilco-Salcon contract, Napocor assures the former of a market for its 200-MW coal-fired power plant in Naga, Cebu City, for at least 10 years starting 2011, by sharing all its contracts with the power distribution companies. In other words, Napocor, like in the LHDC deal, will also peddle Kephilco-Salcon's generated electricity to other distribution utilities during the 10-year period.

Transco has also committed to buy power from Kephilco-Salcon for reserve and backup.

With such agreements, Napocor has blatantly violated the Epira: By offering power supply contracts to distribution firms, Napocor has done away with public bidding which is a requirement for all distribution utilities.

Napocor has also given undue advantage to LHDC and Kephilco-Salcon to the prejudice of other power generation companies. Napocor, by favoring these companies, destroyed the very essence of the Epira, which is to ensure transparent and reasonable prices of electricity under a regime of free and fair competition and full public accountability.

Napocor has acted way beyond its power and authority in the sale of power. Sec. 47 of the Epira provides that Napocor may generate and sell electricity only from the undisposed generating assets and IPP contracts of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

The power supply contract being offered by Napocor on behalf of the LHDC will be sold at a very high price of P4.32/kWh which is way beyond the ERC-approved rate for Mindanao of only a little more than P2/kWh. This will mean additional burden to electricity consumers in the form of higher power rates, plus commissions to Napocor.

The LHDC tried to justify the high price by saying it is way below the projected price of P5.70/kWh in 2011. But such a set price has undermined the power and authority of the ERC because all rates are subject to its scrutiny and approval. Napocor and LHDC assume so much by setting a definite average price for a sale that has yet to come several years from now.

The question is: How come legislators, who are members of the powerful Joint Congressional Power Commission, were kept in the dark about the power deals? *Napalusutan sila*, at a time when Congress was adjourning and all were concerned with the election campaign.

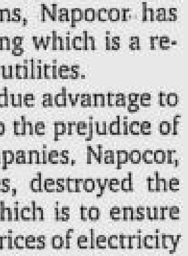
Naturally, the congressmen, especially those from Mindanao, are hopping mad. Lanao del Sur Rep. Faysah RPM Dumarpa said that both Congress and the Office of the Ombudsman should dig deeper into the Napocor-LHDC deal because of charges that Napocor officials who forged the contracts abused their authority and committed acts that violated both the Epira and the privatization policy of the government.

Rep. Edgar Valdez of the Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (Apec) called on Malacañang to reorganize the Napocor because of its decision to enter into what appears to be a "take-or-pay contract" with the LHDC. Valdez said the string of alleged irregularities at the Napocor calls for a changing of the guards in the power firm, especially amid criticisms that the government's energy officials have failed to implement the Epira in relation to the privatization and regulation of the energy sector.

And Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte has called for the scrapping of the Lanao hydro power deal because it would have disastrous effects on the lives of his constituents in Lanao del Norte and the residents of Lanao del Sur.

Joke

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

I'VE ALWAYS LIKED AND RESPECTED JOKER Arroyo. It's not because he is a Bicolano. I don't particularly like or respect the other Bicolanos who have been thrust into the limelight over the years, except for Raul Roco.

Joker I've liked and respected in the same way that I've always liked and respected Nene Pimentel. Despite drifting to the "Dark Side" at some point in their lives, they've kept a good deal of the "Force" inside them—in the form of defending human rights. That was how they made a name for themselves to begin with, as human rights lawyers. No, more than that, as people whose hearts burned with the libertarian fire.

Imagine, therefore, my profound dismay when I heard Joker last week, defending his decision to join GMA's ticket. It's bad enough that he did join it.

He would have been better off running as an independent and preserved whatever patches of believability still clung to his claim of being a maverick. Even if he wins this battle, he will have lost the war. Some defeats are luminous victories, some victories are crushing defeats. One would imagine that our natural trajectory is to commit mistakes in our youth, as we sow our wild oats; and grow wisdom in our age, as our thoughts turn toward bequeathing a good name to our children, if not to justifying our lives to our Maker. Alas, in this country the opposite happens.

It's bad enough that Joker enlisted in GMA's cause. It's worse that he defended it the way he did.

In the past, he said, he's crossed swords with GMA, particularly when she declared emergency rule, when she supported Cha-cha and when her government got involved in shady deals. But he has had no reason to give up on her. On the contrary, he has had every reason to be bullish about her. "No one can deny that the country is moving forward. The political choice in the coming election is to trip up the country or help it along." The opposition, he said, has nothing to offer. All it has done is try to impeach GMA. While at that, "one has yet to hear the opposition denounce attempts by military adventurers to topple the government and set up one outside the Constitution."

How can anyone who has ever been a human rights lawyer possibly be confused about the direction in which this country has moved? It is not forward, it is downward. At the very least, it's no small irony that a day before Joker said this, his boss had just walked out of a press conference because our reporter, Gil Cabacungan Jr., kept asking her why the effects of her touted economic growth had not reached the hungry. In fact, Gil didn't just ask a perfectly legitimate question, he asked the only question worth asking. Growth that happens explosively in only one part of the body is not called progress, it is called cancer.

But far more than that, how can anyone who has ever been a human rights lawyer possibly not see the killings? Or, indeed, the mayhem that is happening right in a Bicolano's own backyard? The deaths caused by the superstorms from the Pacific are nothing compared to the deaths wrought by the evil wind from Malacañang. One has yet to hear the opposition denounce the extra-constitutional plots of adventurous military officers? One has yet to hear Joker denounce the extrajudicial executions by murderous state-sponsored cutthroats. The killings are not just a vicious trespass against human rights and civil liberties, they are an abomination against any decent community, never mind democracy.

And still that is nothing. One has yet to hear the opposition denounce attempts by military adventurers to topple government and set up one outside the Constitution? One has yet to hear Joker denounce the actual act by a presidential aspirant of stealing the vote and setting up a government outside the Constitution. How can anyone, human rights lawyer or not, possibly ignore the "Hello Garci" tape? The fact that it was illegally obtained may only prevent us from using it to jail GMA. It may not prevent us from using it to not hail her as President. The only reason no one, opposition or not, is denouncing any attempt to oust this regime, by coup or by Cory, by military strike or by People Power, is that this regime is a coup regime. One wrought by ballots rather than by bullets, one wrought by Garci rather than by guns. It has been defended by guns ever since, which brings us back to the killings.

It was Joker who rose brilliantly to damn the Erap government in the impeachment trial for having betrayed the public trust. Where is the Joker to damn this regime, brilliantly or sullenly, for never having had it in the first place?

All the opposition has done is to try to impeach GMA? I may not be a fan of the opposition, but if that is all it has done, then we owe it an eternal debt of gratitude—that is all that needs to be done. Not cross swords with GMA over details, but cross her out for having no right to rule. The issue is not performance, it is legitimacy. People who are not elected have no right to rule. People who try to do something about it are not being destructive, they are being constructive. People who fight injustice are not pulling the country downward, they are pushing the country forward.

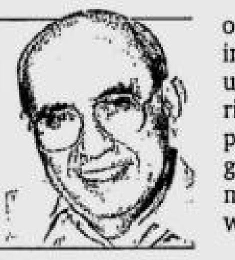
If Cory had been "negativistic" when she heroically fought to bring Marcos down, Edsa would never have happened, and Joker would never have been executive secretary. If Joker had been "negativistic" when he fought heroically to bring Erap down, then Edsa II would not have happened, and Joker would never have ended up a GMA minion. Ah, but how soon people forget who they are and what they did.

The political choice in this election is to be a principled alternative or to be a huge joke. The latter brings tears to the eyes, and not from merriment.

University rankings

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.



I UNDERSTAND THAT SOME ATENEO PARENTS, and prospective Ateneo parents, were disturbed or discouraged by the announcement that the Ateneo did not sail with flying colors in the recently released THES-QS World University Rankings. The rankings, as a matter of fact, have been a hot topic among university personnel in various parts of the world, and many questions have been asked about the methodology used. In an effort to explain the rankings and to answer many questions, Ben Sowter, QS head for research, and Mandy Mok, QS regional director for Asia Pacific, met with various Philippine university officials, both jointly and separately. This is what we found.

The ranking of the different universities is based on four key themes: Graduate Employability, International Commitment, Teaching Quality, and Research Quality. What did we find?

First, the good news—for both students and parents. Among the Philippine universities, the Ateneo ranked highest in Graduate Employability. This was drawn from Recruiter Review based on the responses of recruiters in the QS database and media and university referrals. The other criteria are simple inputs of quantitative data that QS was able to gather either directly from the universities, from the website, or from previous year's data.

The highest rank in Recruiter Review means that from the point of view of the world outside, Ateneo graduates are the most sought-after in terms of employment.

Not so encouraging are the results of Peer Review, worth 40 percent. But how does Peer Review work? The score for Peer Review was determined by the responses of active academics. Each academic was asked to select the 30 best universities in their subject area (Arts and Humanities, Engineering and IT, Life Sciences and Biomedicine, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) in their chosen region (North America, Europe, Asia, etc.). There were equal weights given to the five subject areas.

The Peer Review, which has the biggest weight, provides some real challenges that must be understood and overcome. One of these is the absence of Ateneo from the ranking in the Arts and Humanities, an area traditionally identified as a strong point of Ateneo. This suggests that Ateneo will have to work to be better known by colleagues abroad. However, there are also questions about the accuracy of the survey. Only about 1 percent of those surveyed returned the questionnaire, yet this accounts for 40 percent of the score.

The Ateneo also ranked low in the area of student-faculty ratio. But there is serious question about the comparability and accuracy of the data used and how they were sourced.

There is more good news, however. In the area of International Faculty and International Students, the Ateneo ranked highest, thus placing the Ateneo on top in internationalization. But this comes as no surprise considering that Ateneo has been a pioneer in providing students with a global perspective through its Junior Term Abroad in 39 institutions in 11 countries (Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, France, Spain, Germany, Norway, and the United States), and through its China and Europe study tours.

Indeed, the rankings pose questions that need further study and introspection. One question that has already been repeatedly raised even by other top universities is how seriously these rankings should be taken, although they have been used for recruitment purposes and bragging rights. While they provide some measure of comparison, how do they relate to the mission and goals of the university? To what extent should measures be taken to improve the rankings and at what cost?

Clearly, the survey hardly delves into what Ateneo does best: the total formation of students. There is nothing in the instrument that shows how a university deliberately puts systems in place so that its students may become nurturing persons, life-long learners and heroic leaders, and that there have been positive outcomes reflected in its graduates. This formation for leadership is what makes Ateneo the highly regarded university that it has been for almost 150 years.

In an earlier article of Ateneo president Fr. Bienvenido F. Nebres, S.J., he points out: "Rankings in the Times survey are important because they measure how the world perceives us. But just as a person has to take what people think of them in the context of their own values and priorities, we, too, have to reflect on these perceptions and measures within our own view of our vision and mission. Thus, while we will work on strengthening our research and publications in ISI journals … we need to do this in a way that does not move us away from our vision/mission and our traditional strengths: leadership formation and contribution to national development. These have to continue to be our priorities as a Jesuit university committed to the service of faith and the promotion of justice; and as a university in a Philippines whose greatest challenge is overcoming poverty and national development."

P.S. To my colleagues in the law school: Law did not seem to figure in the survey at all. But secure as we are of our place in the Philippine legal firmament, I am sure there is a lot more we can do.

Banned

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

IN THE END, IT WAS THE INTEREST OF THE people—their health and the environment—that prevailed over the interest of big business. Despite strong opposition from banana growers, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte recently signed into law a local measure banning the aerial spraying of pesticides in Davao City.

While the ban affects all agricultural entities, it was the banana industry, particularly the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) that lobbied hard to prevent the passage of the landmark ordinance. PBGEA even sought help from no less than Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, who warned of capital flight if the ordinance would be passed. But Yap's grim predictions failed to sway the council and Duterte. After signing the ordinance, Duterte instead gave the agriculture secretary an aerial tour of the city's banana plantations.

Once the ordinance became effective—that is, after its publication in a newspaper—plantation owners who engage in aerial spraying of pesticides—they constitute 25 percent of all agricultural entities in the city—will have three months to phase out such practice. The penalties provided for a violation of the ordinance include a fine of P5,000 and an imprisonment ranging from one month to one year; and, for repeat offenders, suspension or perpetual cancellation of city-issued permits and licenses.

Indeed, the anti-aerial spray ordinance is one of the most divisive issues Davao City had to contend with in recent years. The heated debates between the pros and cons were not limited to the members of the city council; the debates also broke out outside official circles.

On one side of the debate were the members of various environmental groups, NGOs, people's organizations, members of the academe and other professional groups. Actually, these were the same groups that started the anti-aerial spray campaign and prodded the city council to take notice of the matter. On the other side were PBGEA members, plantation owners and workers, some barangay officials and government agencies like the Department of Health, Department of Trade and Industry and National Economic and Development Authority, which painted a bleak scenario in the event that the ban would be imposed. The "war" was also waged in the media, where anti-aerial spray proponents were demonized as anti-development.

At one point, City Councilors Nenita Orcullo, the principal author of the ordinance, and Leonardo Avila, the chair of the committee on environment, were even declared persona non grata by a group identified with the banana owners. "In the end, no matter what the consequences will be on your political career, you have to take a stand; you have to make a decisive choice," said Avila.

Indeed, there were insinuations that "going against" the industry (which continues to rank as one of the country's biggest dollar-earner) during this election season is a big political blunder, if not a disaster. It is an open secret that the "support"—direct or indirect—of the so-called captains of the banana industry has been crucial in the political career of politicians, past and present.

Yet, the "unthinkable" happened. Some say the passage of the ordinance was an exercise of pure populism on the part of Duterte and the members of the city council. Although many others believe that it was their genuine concern for the environment and the health of the people that pushed them to pass the ordinance. "It is not about the law. It has something to do with wisdom," Duterte said.

Whatever their reason, the ordinance was a big blow and delivered a strong message to the banana industry, which for decades has dominated many facets of the city's political and economic life.

And, it could just be the beginning. Actually, Davao City is the second, after Bukidnon, to ban the aerial spraying of pesticides. Advocates of the ban should now expand the campaign to other banana-producing areas.

Anti-aerial spraying advocates, though, should not let their guard down. Already, there are talks in media circles that the Davao City ordinance will be amended after the elections to water-down the provisions which the banana owners see as stringent. This is probably the reason Secretary Yap, while he was dismayed at the passage of the ordinance, was quoted as saying that he still expects a "win-win" solution to be made in the future.

But more than banning aerial spraying, probably it is also high time to focus on the other practices, like the unwarranted use of chemicals and pesticides, the job security of banana plantation workers, child labor and other environmental and human rights issues hounding the industry, issues that for so long have been taken for granted.

* * *

GO OUT AND VOTE: The synchronized elections for all chapters of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines are slated this Saturday, Feb. 24. All *compañeros* and *compañeras* who are qualified to vote—those who are lifetime members and those who have paid their dues until last Jan. 30—are encouraged to participate in this biennial exercise.

* * *

Comments at kar_laws@yahoo.com or karlos_z23@hotmail.com

Revolt in the making

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL AND PANAY, A REvolt has begun. Like all revolts, it started small, but it could end up a truly big deal. The revolt has three objectives: the scrapping of the pork barrel; the recomputation of the internal revenue allotment for provinces; and the incorporation of the pork barrel into the internal revenue allotment.

The revolt seeks to achieve success through the enactment of a law. It aims to harness public opinion, regardless of any opposition that officials may demonstrate in the coming months, even years. Like all revolts, it is centered on a threat—not to take up arms, but to use the means so recently perverted by the officials themselves: people's initiative and referendum.

Those who support the revolt envision a law with the following provisions in broad strokes. The law would make it the policy of the State to limit the work of Congress to enacting legislation (and, I presume, to its equally essential work of oversight and investigation). It would prohibit representatives and senators from implementing and following-up projects. The law would provide for a line item budget; and it would punish local officials who violate the law.

The gentleman who told me about this brewing revolt is named Luis Mirasol Jr. I first met him last December, when I was in Bacolod City to speak on behalf of OneVoice in a forum sponsored by the archdiocese. When I met him again in Bacolod City one afternoon late last week, he said their little revolt has been making big waves in the local media, and they are trying to engage allies in their cause. His hope is that their proposal will receive national attention—and participation.

It struck me that at the heart of the proposal are certain advocacies that have gained wide currency in the ranks of our political, professional, academic and other classes. The advocacies are: more local autonomy, which requires more fiscal independence; a drastic reduction in patronage which has corrosive effects on official accountability and sound public administration; and a leveling of the playing field to enable voters to really have a choice come election time.

The day after Mr. Mirasol took the trouble to come to La Salle Bacolod (where I was giving a talk to student journalists), I ran into an old friend (but younger than me) about to run for public office for the first time. He was in the company of other young officials. They spoke of the President in glowing terms (affiliated, as they are, with the ruling coalition). I stated I didn't share their opinion, and one replied that, well, some of them hadn't supported her in the beginning, either, but that the President was taking good care of their province.

And a day after that, I found myself in a cable TV show sponsored by the provincial government, exchanging thoughts with my aspiring politico-friend, with me doing my best to try to agree to disagree with him politely on certain issues. After all, regardless of the politics of many provincial officials I meet, I generally agree with their desire to achieve more local autonomy. I suggested, though, that since the President herself has stated she only wishes to retire gracefully in 2010, then it seems necessary for local officials to consider what treatment they'd like from whoever ends up the next president.

If the President pleased her provincial allies from day one, by dutifully remitting their portion of the taxes, still, she hasn't exactly been shy about reminding officials they should thank her. And she has been crafty in keeping a tight rein over members of the House. Their constant friction with governors—perennial political rivals of all congressmen for the affection of the mayors—can only be lubricated with the application of the grease from the pork barrel.

The release of funds, from Palace to governors, (provided they vote the administration's way), and from Palace to congressmen, and even to senators, results in four things. First, it ties the hands of the members of Congress: no toeing of the party line means no signed checks. Second, it dissipates funds, spreading them between the competing agendas of congressmen and provincial governments. Third, it turns a right into a favor, a duty into a means for political extortion. Fourth, it strengthens the notion that a representative is primarily a fixer, and not a lawmaker.

So I said, watch out for this revolt brewing in your backyard: it has the potential of being a big deal. I don't think this went over very well with some of my young friend's political allies who were watching the show.

We need to debate questions like federalism versus devolution, and so forth, a lot more because the debate has only begun to matter to the public. What the embryonic revolt in Negros Occidental is doing, though, is show we don't have to amend the Constitution in order to start weaning officials—and the electorate—from the teats of our national government. An official grateful to the President for giving officials most of what they're due is an official setting himself up for the possibility of a nasty surprise after 2010. Suppose a president would be elected who would be niggardly in releasing any funds, or would reverse the current tactics and would be generous to congressmen but stingy with local officials? What could anyone do about it?

Officials would face a backlash from their constituents—or put another way, it would be more of the same: a presidency with a hold over local government and even Congress—a grip that the Constitution never intended any incumbent to have. And think of it: if Congress was made a useless place for fixers, the kind of candidates we might just radically change.

The Singapore story

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

THE LAST TIME WE VISITED SINGAPORE WAS ALMOST 20 years ago. I was posted in Jakarta, and Singapore was hosting the annual Asean Foreign Ministers Meeting. Our foreign secretary was the late Raul Manglapus and I recall that he had just come out of a confrontation with various women's groups in the country for his comments regarding rape. He was quoted as saying that if women can't avoid it, they might as well relax and get some enjoyment. Of course, he probably was joking when he made those remarks but…

This trip was for personal reasons. Penny and I wanted to visit the places we missed when we traveled as part of an official delegation. At the departure lounge of the Naia 2 Centennial terminal, we had our first brush with the basic reality of Philippine-Singapore relations. A young girl, possibly 22 years old, asked if she could join us at our table. She had a bowl of noodles which represented a late brunch for her. After she had settled down, she told us that she was from Cabugao, Ilocos Sur. Her husband was a tricycle driver, and they had a 7-year-old boy. The husband's income was unstable and they felt it was necessary to try her luck abroad. Somehow she was recruited as a domestic helper for a Singaporean family. Her English was quite limited, but there was a look of determination on her face.

Government press releases refer to overseas Filipino workers as heroes. They sacrifice so much for so little because our government is unable to provide them with better opportunities at home. As the young lady excused herself and stood up, I prayed that her employers would be decent people who would treat her as a fellow human being. I thought of her little boy and the terrible cost we have to pay in terms of the lives of so many Filipino families in similar situations.

From the Singapore side, this is how it looks. In her book "Singapore in a Nutshell" (4th edition), Dr. Arlene Bastion of Nanyang Technological University notes "that our economy might actually depend upon the Philippines because so many of us depend on our Filipino maids. Filipino maids are then contributing rather directly to the success of the economy because, by managing households, they enable women and men to work. Households cease to function when the maid goes home, gets sacked or imprisoned. What more the economy."

* * *

Our hotel, The Stamford, is located in front of the Civilian War Memorial, which is dedicated to all those who perished during the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945. Unofficial figures put the death toll at 50,000, most of whom were rounded up and machine-gunned to death by Japanese troops as punishment for supporting China in the 1937 Sino-Japanese conflict.

The memorial was a reminder that last Thursday, Feb. 15, was the 65th anniversary of the fall of Fortress Singapore in World War II. It took 70 days for 60,000 Japanese troops moving on bicycles with very limited food supplies to capture Malaya and Singapore, along with 130,000 British, Indian and Australian soldiers. The Japanese forces were led by Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita who established a reputation as the "Tiger of Malaya." Winston Churchill, the wartime British prime minister, described the fall of Singapore as "the worse disaster and largest capitulation in British history."

In the first volume of his memoirs "The Singapore Story," Lee Kuan Yew, now a "minister mentor" in the Cabinet of his son Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, writes about the end of the British Empire. "The British built up the myth of their inherent superiority so convincingly that most Asiatics thought it hopeless to challenge them. But now one Asiatic race had dared to defy them and smashed that myth. However, once the Japanese lorded over us as conquerors, they soon demonstrated that they were more cruel, more brutal, more unjust and more vicious than the British."

The elder Lee also describes his first close-up view of a Japanese soldier. "Above all, what made them look strange were their soft, peaked caps, with cloth flaps at the back hanging over their necks. They were outlandish figures, small, squat men carrying long rifles with long bayonets. They exuded an awful stink, a smell I will never forget. It was the odor from the great unwashed after two months of fighting along jungle tracks and estate roads from Kota Bharu to Singapore."

In 1942, Feb. 15 was the lunar new year. It turned out to be the grimmest new year since the Chinese arrived in Singapore in 1819.

* * *

One of the first places a tourist visits on a tour of Singapore is the statue of the Merlion, a mythological creature that has the head of a lion and the body of a fish. With so much picture-taking going on, one could easily miss a lovely poem on the docks fronting the Merlion, "Ulysses by the Merlion" by Edwin Thumboo, a two-time winner of the Singapore Book Award for poetry: "this lion of the sea, salt-maned, scaly, wondrous of tail, touched with power" is perhaps an image of the people of Singapore.

* * *

In less than 40 years, the World Bank reclassified Singapore from a less developed to a developed country. In fact, the second volume of Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs is titled "From Third World to First." The Philippines is exactly the opposite case. In 40 years, we went from the top of Southeast Asia to almost the bottom, just above Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

The Singapore story could never have taken place without the ingredient of discipline, and all the signs of a disciplined population are there. The streets are clean, the rivers are alive, the trees are allowed to grow, providing greenery for the city. People obey the simplest of traffic rules. There is no littering—the fine for this violation is a hefty 1,000 Singaporean dollars. Graffiti activity is punishable with six lashes of the cane. And most important, here the law is strictly implemented and enforced. We have many laws, but enforcement is often on a selective basis. At times, there is practically no enforcement.

* * *

Calling all AIM alumni: The Asian Institute of Management and the AIM Alumni Association are sponsoring an Asian Business Conference "AIM for a New Asia: Unlocking Opportunities" from March 1, 2007 at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel to March 2, 2007 at the AIM campus. The conference is conceived as a vehicle for re-launching AIM as the premier graduate school of management and authority in the Asian region.

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Uncouth, boorish foreigners

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT tourism Secretary Ace Durano must be very pleased with his tourism drive. His numbers are up! The bad news is that half of these numbers are Koreans! No, they're not tourists but temporary residents.

The good news is that they are studying English on their way to the United States. The bad news is that they are causing quite a bit of disruption in the "Korean villages" they are forming. Just ask the locals or the weekenders who go to Tagaytay. You'll have your ears chewed off for at least two hours hearing about the things these Koreans do or don't do.

They rent apartment units or houses in some of the more posh villages and then bully their way through. When they rent the units, they claim they are a family of five. Then the number grows and you notice children, more or less of the same age, occupying the same unit. Before you know it, the unit has been turned into a dorm.

In one of the better posh condos in town, 15 children were found in one unit. They are rough and they are gruff and there is no other name to call them but *bastos* (uncouth, boorish, rude)! I do hope Korean Embassy officials are reading this, so they can warn their invaders that the natives are getting restless.

The problem is all over greater Manila, Tagaytay and Cebu. They have heard how inexpensive it is to live in our country and, in a very well-concerted campaign, have invaded our land. Check with the residents of Bel Air, the condominiums in Ortigas, Greenhills and the Valle Verdes. The problem is, as a people, we are far too accommodating and try our darn best to make the visitors feel at home. That's why they take advantage of us.

Check with those who play golf! Be prepared to spend at least 20 minutes to hear the stories a friend will rattle off.

I suggest to the Korean ambassador that he do something about this because I don't want us going into any racial riots. But, like our National Hero Jose Rizal said, the Filipino is like the carabao, placid, complacent until he goes amok. I trust we don't get to that.

Secretary Durano could perhaps come up with a "How to live in the Philippines 101" for these Koreans. (Lest the readers get the wrong impression, there are many very good Koreans who have been living in this country for some time.)

Now, the Koreans should behave properly and we Filipinos should not allow ourselves to be bullied in our own country.

—MACARIO A. GONZALEZ,
1152 Taft Ave., Manila

Let's vote with our minds, not with our hearts

THIS IS IN REACTION TO ISAgani Cruz's column titled "Our ill-starred Senate." (INQUIRER, 2/11/07)

It saddens me to note that a person like Justice Cruz, whose stint in the Supreme Court should have left him with an open mind, has such a myopic view of what makes for qualified senators.

Losing a mayoral contest or being an actor should not be the only measure of a senatorial candidate's qualifications. The basic question should still be: Is the candidate capable of doing legislative work or not? If he is, then by all means let us vote for him; if not, then let us forget him.

I beg to disagree with Justice Cruz that the only legitimate candidates are Loren Legarda, Francis Escudero, Joker Arroyo, Manny Villar, Francis Pangilinan, Ralph Recto and Sonia Roco. Pangilinan has a lot to explain to the people because he was the one who allowed the nation to be cheated in the last presidential elections. What qualifications does Roco have except that she is also riding on the name of her late husband? So, what makes these candidates better than the rest?

The only right way to elect senators is to vote wisely. We should let our minds, rather than our emotions, rule. We should think of our future rather than think only of the present. We should keep in mind that the work of a senator entails mental exercise. Therefore, we should vote for candidates not because they are popular but simply because they are qualified to be senators of our country.

—ANNIE PUYO,
36 Aberdeen St.,
Project 8, Quezon City

Erratum

Yesterday's editorial, "Harsh words," incorrectly stated that Juan Ponce Enrile voted to retain the US bases in 1991. What the editorial should have referred to was Enrile's vote in favor of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States in 1999. Our apologies.—**Ed.**

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Guarding the guardians

A FEW MINUTES BEFORE WE had our dinner last Feb. 4, a Sunday, I allowed my kids to watch a little TV. They decided to watch a children's show. Mindful as ever, I watched the show over my kids' heads. I know local TV to be extremely insensitive to children, but what I saw a few minutes later unnerved me. In a musical number, boys and girls (of about less than 10 years of age) took turns singing the lines of a popular old song. The lines included:

Pahipo naman, Huwag na!
Pahawak naman, Huwag na!
Di na kita, matsansingan!

As these lines were sung, the children danced "appropriately" to the theme and beat of the song. Just imagine.

I know this is not at all surprising to most readers and some will actually wonder what could be wrong with the picture. Those who understand that the segment shows complete disregard of propriety and decency may be wondering how this could happen in a TV network that boasts of an NGO that promotes child protection.

Would it be baseless to accuse the producers of the show of robbing their own cast of innocence when they asked the kids to perform such a number? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Would it be too much to accuse the top managers of the TV station of gross irresponsibility when they allow such segments in shows that are promoted as child-oriented programs? Perhaps, and perhaps not.

Who will protect children from TV stations?

—VICTOR A. VILLANUEVA,
professor of reading education,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

Don't compare Davide with Bolton

I WAS FURNISHED WITH A COPY of Ramon Farolan's Feb. 12 column in the INQUIRER.

To be clear, I am not one of "those officials wanting to stay on instead of gracefully bowing out from the service." I was assigned as permanent representative of the Philippines to the United Nations, even after I had reached the age of 65, to do a job. My peers have acknowledged that I have served my country well, and Filipinos, especially those in the UN, are proud to cite my achievements. I have fulfilled my mandate.

I understand the feelings of Filipinos in the UN who "accused Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo of committing a faux pas" when he informed UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon that retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide is the new Philippine representative to the UN and when he handed the secretary general an envelope on Davide. They consider it as an unnecessary and uncalled for lobbying of the secretary for Davide which goes against the culture of the organization they work for. They say it has to do with protocol, good taste and a sense of *delicadeza*. Incidentally, I advised Romulo against doing it, but I suppose he had his own reasons for doing so.

It does not help to compare Davide's situation with that of former US Ambassador John Bolton. The latter came to New York as a "seriously flawed and weakened" envoy to the UN. Certainly, we do not wish that baggage on the retired chief justice and, certainly, our country does not intend to do a Philippine John Bolton to the UN.

—LAURO L. BAJA JR.,
Philippine representative
to the United Nations

RP should say no to US war vs Iran

WE FILIPINOS, INCLUDING OUR government, should appeal to US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair not to launch a war against Iran because it would set off a regional holocaust that would also hurt Filipinos, who are just innocent bystanders. Such a war would push oil prices to unparalleled heights such that only the very rich could afford to buy gas.

Moreover, the lives of thousands of Filipinos who work in the Middle East would be placed in danger, while their remittances to their families at home would stop. This would mean greater hunger and sufferings for our people.

Bush and Blair claim that Iran is building a capacity to build a nuclear bomb. Iran's leaders and parliament say that they are merely building a capacity to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. The United Nations Organization has yet to see evidence of nuclear bomb manufacture in Iran. Whom are we going to believe? Bush and Blair who were caught lying after they declared that Iraq under Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction?

After their lie was exposed, they changed their tune. They now say that they are introducing democracy to Iraq. What we see in Iraq is not democracy but puppetry by a few, a popular insurgency and a brewing civil war that have killed tens of thousands of Iraqis.

Since, according to surveys, the majority of Filipinos are still the biggest admirers of Bush and Blair despite their being hated by the rest of the world, maybe Bush and Blair would listen to them. As for me, I say, Bush and Blair, please stop, *sobra na, tama na, maawa na kayo*.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

System loss charges, VAT prescribed by law

THIS IS IN REPLY TO THE LETTER OF LARRY Wilson titled, "Taxing consumers for pilfered power." (INQUIRER, 2/8/07)

He said that by not forcing the utilities to file charges against those stealing electricity, the Energy Regulatory Commission makes it possible for the utilities to avoid additional expenses and, therefore, earn more profits. Please allow me to clarify.

I cannot speak in behalf of the other distribution utilities. But I would like to assure Wilson that we, in Meralco, are waging a very aggressive campaign against power pilferage. In fact, we have signed several memoranda of agreement with local government units, specifically to address the problem of electricity theft and illegal connections. A significant number of our workforce have been dedicated to the task of going after power pilferers—meaning, we, in fact, allocate a substantial amount of resources for the purpose.

Wilson also raised the issue of why legitimate customers are charged for pilfered electricity. The collection of "system loss charge," which is revenue-neutral, was provided for by Republic Act 7832—to allow private distribution utilities to recover the cost of power lost due to both technical and non-technical causes. Pilfered electricity falls under the category of non-technical losses. The law, however, allows private distribution utilities to recover from the customers up to 9.5 percent of the amount of system losses. All losses beyond this 9.5-percent cap set by the law, the utilities shoulder. Electric cooperatives, on the other hand, are allowed a cap of up to 14 percent.

Lastly, Wilson asked why consumers are charged the value added tax for the system loss charge. The law, as explicitly stated in RA 9337 or the Reformed VAT Law (RVAT), imposes a value-added tax on the sale of electricity and related services by generation, transmission and distribution companies. The 9.5-percent system loss is part of electricity sold. It is our duty, as a responsible corporate citizen, to abide by what the law prescribes.

We hope this letter clarifies the matters Wilson raised in his letter—in the spirit of transparency and fair play.

—ELPI O. CUNA,
vice president and director,
Corporate Communication,
Meralco, 11/F Lopez Building,
Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City

No response from QC mayor and barangay chair

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE INQUIRER for publishing my letter about "Salvage Street" last Jan. 5, 2007. Just to let you know, since then, the Barangay Mariana chair and the Quezon City mayor's office have done exactly nothing to help.

Further, the INQUIRER delivery guy, who used to bring my paper before 6 a.m., gave up on my route. It was he who discovered those latest corpses, and now he is too terrified to even go by Salvage Street. I was passed on to another delivery boy who, despite repeated complaints, never brings the paper before 7:30 a.m. More often than not, the INQUIRER gets here toward noon, when all of us in the family are either at work or in school.

So at the end of the day, we come home to a stale newspaper all because even the newsboys are too scared of the ghosts (human and nonhuman) that haunt Salvage Street.

—MA. CARMEN AQUINO SARMIENTO

'All politics' quote from O'Neill, not Gingrich

IN HER JAN. 2 COLUMN, BELINDA OLIVares-Cunanan attributed the quote "All politics is local" to former US House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Actually, the quote came from former Speaker Thomas Phillip "Tip" O'Neill Jr. who served as Speaker for 10 years, the second-longest serving Speaker in US history. He served in the US House of Representatives for 34 years, representing two congressional districts of Massachusetts.

—JESSE CABANACAN,
jcabanacan1@verizon.net

Penalties for violation of senior citizens' rights

IN RESPONSE TO THE LETTER OF CARLOS Manalastas (INQUIRER, 1/24/07) I would like to assure him there is no law banning senior citizens from using credit cards for the purchase of medicines and other items covered by Republic Acts 7432 and 9257. However, drug stores and many supermarkets have reportedly refused to honor the senior citizens' 20-percent discount privilege, claiming that this eats up whatever income they expect to realize from such sales.

But the law, RA 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003 now provides the penalties for those who will violate any of its provisions.

Sec. 10 of the law states:

"Any person who violates any provision of this Act shall suffer the following penalties:

"1. For the first violation, a fine of not less than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000) but not exceeding One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000) and imprisonment of not less than six (6) months but not more than two (2) years.

"2. For any subsequent violation, a fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000) but not exceeding Two hundred thousand pesos (P200,000) and imprisonment of not less than two (2) years but not more than six (6) years ....

"If the offender is a corporation, organization or any similar entity, the official thereof directly involved shall be liable therefor ....

"Upon filing an appropriate complaint and after due notice and hearing, the proper authorities may also cause the cancellation or revocation of the business permit, permit to operate, franchise and other similar privileges granted to any business entity that fails to abide by the provisions of this Act."

—ZENAIDA S. REYES,
lawyer, 19 Derby St.,
White Plains, Quezon City

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Soldiers' votes seen to ease out Left

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE MILITARY IS planning to use the votes of soldiers to ease out militant party-list representatives and their leaders in the barangays through the local elections in May and barangay elections in October, a leader of the party-list group Anakpawis said.

Willy Marbella, an Anakpawis nominee in this year's elections, said the details of that plan were outlined in the document "Special SOT (Special Operations Team) Project: Counter party-list at the barangay council."

The document, sub-titled "Developing a better community leadership to address the grassroots problems at the barangay level" and "AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) onward to political warfare arena," was written by a certain Lt. Col. Yogyog and began to be implemented in 2006, according to Marbella.

The document held the view that "local communist movement leaders and party-list representatives ... will multiply their efforts to get as much votes and seats from the barangay to Congress."

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, to which Marbella works as deputy secretary general, reported obtaining the document from a military official whom it did not identify.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino said the document is "merely a thesis paper" by Yogyog in a general staff course.

"It is not an official paper of the AFP," Tolentino told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview on Sunday.

He said it has not been adopted as a program of the Army.

Tolentino also said the paper's author was not assigned in any infantry battalion.

"[Yogyog] is with the Scout Rangers, and is not involved in SOT work," he said.

Asked about soldiers being primed as a voting bloc against party-list groups, Tolentino said: "We don't force soldiers to vote for or against any candidate. But we do explain to them that we regard the New People's Army as an enemy and so those groups that are allies of the NPA are also our enemies. Soldiers should think well who to vote for."

Marbella believed the document is authentic and reflected the official actions of the AFP in recent months in communities where SOT teams had been deployed.

The document, he said, confirmed that the "AFP is involved in partisan politics and is highly active in sabotaging our organizations and our party-list groups."

The paper also explained why soldiers have reportedly registered twice for the elections.

"In effect they became flying voters," Marbella said in a statement.

A copy of the document given to the INQUIRER gave this instruction to soldiers: "A company of soldiers having a detachment in a [communist] influenced barangay can register in the [town] as residents by buying their residence certificates (legitimize barangay residency status) in the municipal hall a year prior to election day and register with the local Comelec (Commission on Elections) as voters in the barangay where their detachment is located."

Anticipating doubts, it provided an advice. "When questioned that they do not have properties in the area, the ready argument is, 'Even squatters in the cities who live under the bridges are considered residents of Makati or Davao City, [how] much more the soldiers who live in said detachments for two to five years?'" the document said.

If the soldiers qualified as barangay residents, it said "the 70 to 100 soldiers can now help vote into office the CAA (Cafgu Active Auxiliaries) or AFP retirees or allies into the barangay council by 2007 and national election."

The residency status is a basis for soldiers to pilot test the concept, the document said.

According to the document, this has to be done because "in the AFP, there is a growing concern about the growing party-list influence in the barangays as they supplant the SOTized barangays year in and year out."

The second approach is to train and field CAA and AFP retirees as candidates in the barangay elections, the document said.

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4 party-list leaders file complaint vs Army, rebel group

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—LEADERS OF four party-list groups here filed on Tuesday a complaint against the Philippine Army and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade before the Commission on Elections in Negros Occidental for alleged harassment of their leaders and members in Negros Occidental.

Bayan Muna Negros Occidental chair Alejandro Deoma, Anakpawis Negros Occidental coordinator Allen Mirasol, Gabriela Women's Party vice president for the Visayas Nenita Cherniguin and Kabataan Party Negros Occidental secretary general Joan Diamante signed the complaint.

In their complaint, the party-list leaders said soldiers have allegedly harassed their members before the campaign period started and they feared the harassment would intensify in the coming days.

They alleged that Army personnel belonging to the 61st Infantry Battalion have conducted house-to-house campaign in Barangays Orong and Hilamonan in Kabankalan City, in Himamaylan City and, lately, in Hinoba-an town urging residents to withdraw their membership from the party-list groups.

The soldiers also asked the residents to refrain from voting for the party-list groups, the party-list leaders alleged.

They claimed that a certain "Sergeant Abay" of the 61st IB harassed peasant organizer Archilles Yonson, a resident of Barangay Orong, Kabankalan City, on Jan. 26. The soldier allegedly warned Yonson, a National Federation of Sugarcane Workers organizer, to stop his involvement in progressive organizations, they added.

"We don't want unfair red-labeling tactics designed to malign our organizations to happen again," the complainants said.

They recalled that in 2004, their posters were painted with words "do not vote for communist fronts."

"We were accused of being 'terrorists' and 'state enemies,' which put the lives of our members in grave danger," they said.

The military denied the allegations. "Those are fabricated allegations," said 61st IB commander Col. Norman Flores.

The complainants said they also opposed the proposal to exempt the RPA-ABB from the Comelec gun ban.

The members of RPA-ABB, a breakaway group of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army, were given permits to carry firearms as part of a peace agreement signed in 2000.

The party-list leaders said it would be dangerous to allow the RPA-ABB to carry firearms during the election period because of the 2004 experience, when numerous complaints were lodged against its members for gun ban violations.

Comelec Negros Occidental superintendent Jessie Suarez said the groups should back their complaints with affidavits and file them before the police or prosecutor's office.

ROUNDUP

40-day feeding for Bicol kids

SORSOGON CITY—For 40 days starting Feb. 2, Grades 1 to 6 pupils in Bicol will be fed with milk, noodles, chocolate drinks, sardines and rice. The Department of Education launched this nutrition rehabilitation program to supplement the nutritional needs of about 86,000 schoolchildren in Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Ligao City, Tabaco City and Legazpi City. Shirley Borja, DepEd regional health supervisor, said the program will feed the children daily. *Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Books, school supplies for S. Luzon

PRIETO DIAZ, Sorsogon—Education Undersecretary Vilma Labrador distributed books and school supplies here and in other districts on Feb. 7 under a recently launched program dubbed "Tuloy ang Pag-aaral ng mga Bata (The Children's Studies Continue)." At least 638,000 students in Southern Luzon, who were affected by the recent calamities, will be benefited. Labrador said the government was accepting donations for the program. *Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Mayor sworn into office

LEGAZPI CITY—Mayor Rommel Muñoz of Camalig, Albay was finally proclaimed and sworn into office as the chief executive of the cement-producing town. Judge Nimfa Gomez administered the oath of office for Muñoz, a practicing physician, after he was proclaimed by the Commission on Elections on Jan. 24. Muñoz garnered 13,941 votes to win the mayoral seat, while Vicente Moyo won as vice mayor with 12,372 votes. *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Avian flu watch at Mindoro lake

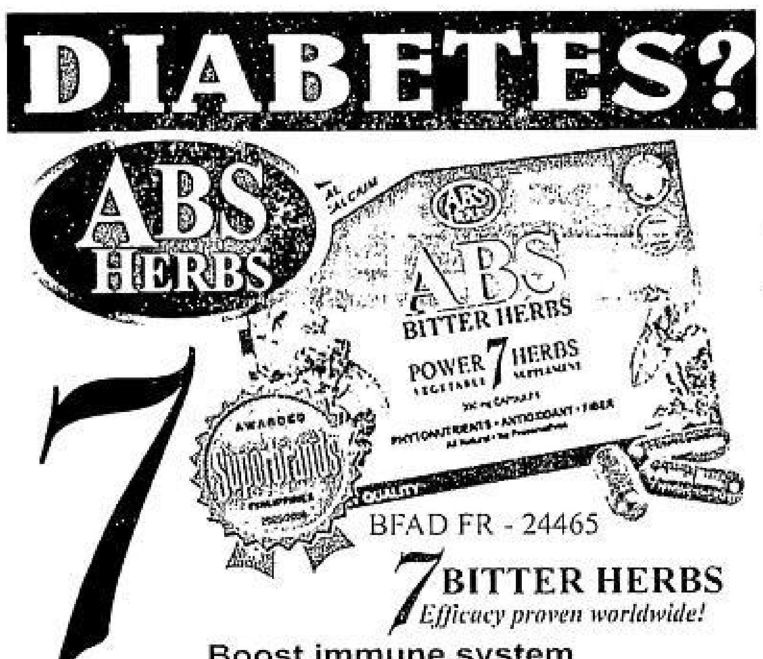
CITY OF CALAPAN—The provincial task force on avian flu has been monitoring Naujan Lake for bird flu with the onset of the hot season when migratory birds are expected to come, according to the Oriental Mindoro provincial information office. Avian flu provincial coordinator Dr. Roli Fria said they are conducting regular checking of blood and wastes samples along the banks of Naujan Lake. The samples are then brought for analysis to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Lipa City. Fria said they were also closely monitoring the towns near Naujan Lake—Pola, Socorro, Naujan and Victoria. *Madonna Virola, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Cops to stop stolen-cars trading

ANGELES CITY—The police's traffic management group in Central Luzon has launched "Oplan Segunda Mano" to stop the trading of stolen vehicles in the region. TMG regional director Supt. Eleuterio Gutierrez said they have asked dealers of used cars to secure clearances from the TMG and the local police before they could sell vehicles. Gutierrez said police would go after syndicate members who steal cars and luxury vehicles in Metro Manila and sell them to Central Luzon dealers and buyers after falsifying their registration papers. *Jun Malig, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Cops nab suspected leader of armed group

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Police arrested the suspected leader and three members of a private armed group in San Simon town on Saturday. Chief Insp. Rodolfo Noel Caligagan, provincial director of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit, arrested Luisito Batu, 38, suspected leader of the Batu Group; Jeremy Carlos, 26; Christoper Calilung, 36; and Dennis Gozum, 32, after a chase. Batu has a pending arrest warrant issued by Judge Omar Viola of the Angeles City regional trial court. Seized from the group were two .45 cal. pistols, a .38 cal. revolver and bullets. *Jun Malig, Inquirer Central Luzon*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Pampanga groups share survival stories with Bicolanos

LEGAZPI CITY—IT WAS A JOURNEY MADE NOT just to deliver truckloads of relief goods to Albay but to bring comfort and spread goodwill.

The Cabalen caravan to Bicol, a three-day solidarity mission organized by the church-based Social Action Center of Pampanga (Sacop), was composed of parish workers and priests, local government executives, including disaster officers and village chiefs, and representatives of local non-government and business groups.

In a forum held Feb. 16 at SAC-Legazpi, the highlight of their mission, they shared their experiences of the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption to Albayanos reeling from Mt. Mayon's disasters in 2006.

Typhoons Milenyo and Reming that hit the country late last year, left hundreds dead and missing and devastated the homes and livelihood of thousands in Southern Luzon.

Magdalena Mendoza of Minalin town recounted how the house that she built from savings after a stint as an overseas worker was wiped out by lahar one month after Mt. Pinatubo erupted.

She narrated how she found the courage to rebuild her life after joining a women's organization that helped in the sandbagging of the dikes and in cleaning the river.

"I used to be timid but this changed when I joined the group and learned that we could also stand on our own when the menfolk are not around," she said.

Boy Limpin, a farmer-member of a cooperative, said he found strength being part of an association.

With support from the group he was able to transfer to an unattended land when lahar buried a vegetable plot he was tending in a temporary shelter.

Isaias Panganiban Jr., disaster action officer of Guagua, a town that experienced the ravages of typhoons, earthquake, flashfloods and periodic lahar flows, emphasized how local flood mitigation projects and community participation considerably reduced economic losses after Pinatubo.

"Don't lose hope and never give up," was their common message to their listeners, who came from various parish centers in the mudflow-hit villages of Legazpi City, Daraga, Camalig and Guinobatan.

Fr. Deo K.S. Galang, Sacop executive director said the caravan brought along three truckloads of rice, food, brand new clothes and boxes of medicines donated by parishes, local governments, civil society and business groups.

About P1.5 million worth of checks generated from a telethon project of the local government of San Fernando and from various sectors was turned over to 'Simbahan Para Mayon,' a program of SAC-Legazpi, he said.

Gina Rodriguez, Inquirer Southern Luzon

W A R N I N G
GUIMARAS ISLAND OIL POLLUTION

THE *SOLAR I OIL TANKER* CONTAINING 1,700,000 LITERS OF FUEL OIL IS SUNKEN AT A DEPTH OF 640 METERS WITHIN THE GUIMARAS ISLAND. RECOVERY OF THE OIL CARGO IS IMPERATIVE TO AVOID FURTHER OIL POLLUTION. AN AVERAGE COMPARTMENT CONTAINS 210 CUBIC METERS (70 SQUARE METERS X 3 METERS).

A) SUCTION IS "*IMPOSSIBLE*" TO RECOVER THE OIL BY THIS METHOD. NO SUCTION PUMP HAS THE CAPACITY TO SIPHON THE OIL AT 640 METERS DEEP. IN ADDITION, THE WEIGHT OF THE WATER ABOVE THE COMPARTMENT BEING EMPTIED (70 METERS X 640 METERS) IS 44,800 METRIC TONS WILL CRUSH IT LIKE A PIECE OF PAPER AND THE OIL REMAINING WILL ESCAPE AND A GREATER OIL POLLUTION WILL OCCUR. THEREFORE, THE OIL RECOVERY OPERATION BY "*SUCTION MUST NEVER BE ATTEMPTED*" FOR THE SAKE OF NATIONAL INTEREST.

TO IGNORE THIS "*WARNING*" IS BAD FAITH AND WILL INVITE NUMEROUS CASES OF DAMAGES.

B) DISPLACEMENT METHOD IS THE *SURE*, *SAFER*, *EASIER*, *QUICKER*, *CHEAPER*, AND *SIMPLIER* WAY OF RECOVERING THE OIL CARGO OF THE SUNKEN TANKER SOLAR I. THIS PATENTED RECOVERY IS SIMPLY DONE BY PUMPING WATER INTO THE COMPARTMENT THROUGH AN "INTAKE LINE" AND THE OIL AUTOMATICALLY WILL EXIT THROUGH A SECOND LINE LEADING TO THE OIL RECOVERY VESSEL AT THE WATER SURGFACE. THIS PATENT IS BASED ON "*PHYSICS AND SCIENCE*". SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE OIL RECOVERY OPERATION IS ONLY WITHIN *24 TO 72 HOURS*. RECOVERY BY "*DISPLACEMENT*" IS COMPLETED BEFORE THE RECOVERY BY "SUCTION" IS STARTED. WITH ITS SUCCESS, THIS METHOD SHALL BECOME THE "*OIL RECOVERY SYSTEM FOR THE WORLD*" FROM THE DAY ONWARD. THIS PATENT WAS INVENTED BY A *FILIPINO*.

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Contractor of Oil Recovery Operation

REMEMBERING GUINSAUGON JANI ARNAIZ/INQUIRER VISAYAS
Cousins Genelito Esclabosa and Beneto Piquero offer flowers for their grandfather who perished in the 2006 mudslide in Guinsaugon, during it's first anniversary rite Saturday.

10 nabbed for illegal posting of campaign materials

By Carla P. Gomez and Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—BACOLOD COMMISSION ON Elections Registrar Mavil Majarucon on Friday said she would report to the Comelec head office in Manila the posting of the campaign materials of a senatorial candidate outside the common poster areas.

On Feb. 12, the police arrested 10 persons for allegedly posting Lacson's campaign materials on several establishments and structures along Araneta Street, Bacolod City.

The police filed charges for violation of the Omnibus Election Code and Fair Election Act against the 10 before the Bacolod City Prosecutors Office on Wednesday, but they have been released on bail, Majarucon said.

Majarucon said there are about 10 designated common poster areas in Bacolod City, including the Bacolod Public Plaza.

But she said that under Comelec Resolution 7767, parties could put up common poster areas in every barangay with 5,000 registered voters upon application and approval.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos on Wednesday urged police and village officials to prevent the illegal posting of campaign materials outside the Comelec-identified common poster areas or face penalties.

Abalos warned that the police and barangay officials who allow posters outside the designated areas would face administrative charges for dereliction of duty.

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon and provincial police director Senior Supt. Rosendo Franco joined the Comelec call.

The cost of campaign materials would be cheaper for all candidates if they only followed the rules, Marañon said.

He also said that those hired to post the campaign materials should abide by the law because it is they, and not those who hire them, who will end up in jail.

In Cebu City, Senate President Manny Villar was the first senatorial candidate whose posters and streamers were seen in different parts of the city after midnight of Monday last week, the deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy for national candidates and the official start of the campaign.

But environment and election officials were not happy as they vowed to go after the people behind in the posting of campaign materials for violating the election laws.

Comelec Cebu City north district election officer Marchel Sarno said Comelec, the police and the local government will form a task force to go after those people tasked to post campaign materials outside the designated common poster areas.

Sarno said the poll office in Cebu City had designated Plaza Independencia, Fuente Osmeña Rotunda, as well as barangay halls, sports complex or basketball courts of the different barangays as common poster areas.

ELECTION 07

Although Villar's posters were being displayed inside Plaza Independencia, similar posters with slogan "Sipag at Tiyaga" were also seen posted along the major streets of Cebu City.

In M. J. Cuenco Avenue, his posters were seen in electric posts, where a few posters of Senator Edgardo Angara's "Ang Gara ng Buhay" were also seen.

Sarno, however, said it would be difficult to go after the specific candidates because they could always claim that their rivals did the illegal pasting of posters.

The Comelec, police and the local government would instead go after the people caught posting the campaign materials, particularly during night time.

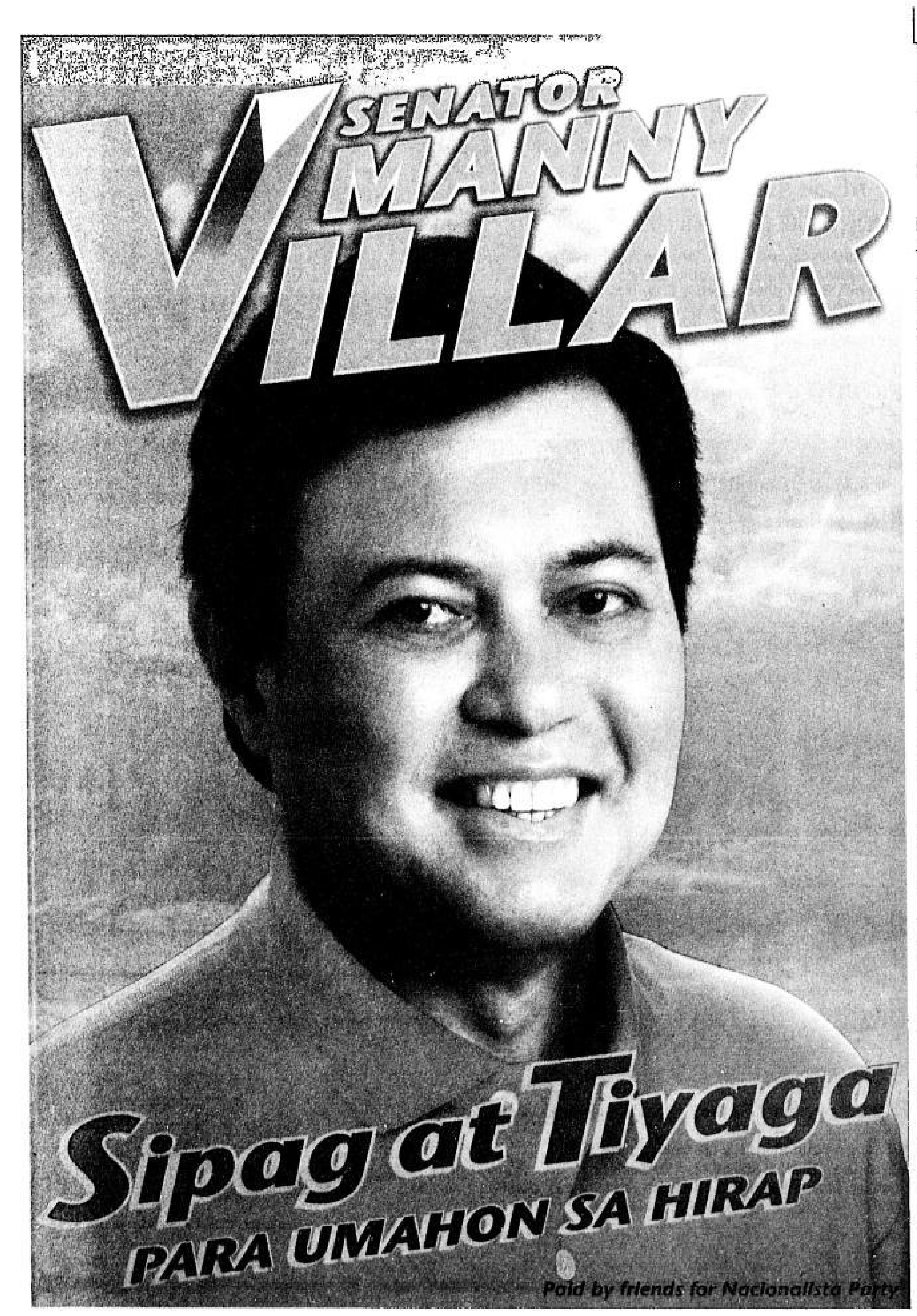
He said the task force would also remove the campaign posters placed outside the common poster areas.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources 7's OIC chief of the Forest Resources Development Division Richard Abella also warned candidates and their supporters against nailing their posters on trees.

He noted that most of Villar's posters placed inside Plaza Independencia were nailed at the trunks of Acacia trees.

Abella said those caught doing this could be charged for violation of Presidential Decree 953, which is the destruction of trees in parks and national highways.

Abella said they would also deploy personnel to go after these people who nail the campaign posters in trees.



Guimaras folk struggling to normalize lives

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

NUEVA VALENCIA, GUIMARAS—The large tents are gone and the plaza is clear of the cramped makeshift quarters set up six months ago.

The residents of Barangay Tando are slowly regaining their lives and hopes after the massive oil spill that hit their shores last year.

Tando was among the villages badly contaminated by the oil sludge when the MT Solar I sank around 15 miles southwest of Guimaras Island on Aug. 11, 2006 spilling about 300,000 liters of bunker fuel on the waters and coastline.

At the height of the contamination, the government evacuated about 100 residents for health reasons. The fishermen had to stop fishing and worked in the cleanup of the contaminated shores to earn money, which was barely enough to feed their families. They depended on the food donations to survive.

Now, the villagers are struggling to make their lives normal again.

Domiciano Gandesila, 58, said he returned to fishing in January, after receiving P12,000 from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund for economic damages resulting from the oil spill.

He spent P4,800 to buy a 5.5-horsepower motor for his boat while he used some of the money to buy fishing nets and other gear.

Gandesila said he gets about five kilos of fish daily, which he sells at P50 to P60 per kilo.

"There are times when I am lucky I get from 10 to 15 kilos. But mostly, the catch is low and we need to go farther into the sea," he said.

Boost

The residents' efforts to get back on their feet received a boost on Thursday after the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives inaugurated a livelihood and rehabilitation project to help residents cope with the long term effects of the oil spill.

The Canadian government provided funds after the Filipino-Canadian community in Canada asked their government to extend assistance to the oil spill victims.

The project involved the donation of four motorized boats, fishnets and other gear for deep-sea fishing to four clusters of fishermen. In turn, the fishermen from the four clusters would divide the income from their catch.

"We wanted a project that would result to a minimum displacement for the residents. So, we decided that our intervention would be concentrated on fishing," said Myrna Jarillas, senior program officer of the Canadian International Development Agency.

Jarillas said the results of consultations by non-government groups implementing the project showed that residents preferred fishing.

"That's what they've been doing all their lives," Jarillas said.

The project also includes the distribution of 140 goats to the residents for breeding. The residents would also receive training on disaster management, gender sensitivity and mangrove reforestation.

Gandesila said they welcomed the project because it was the first to be implemented from the many promises that they heard.

Nueva Valencia Mayor Diosdado Gonzaga said the tragedy has brought opportunities for the people. At least 117 groups have donated rice, canned goods, noodles, clothes and cash for the victims.

However, Gonzaga said they were concerned that much of the 2.1 million liters of the bunker fuel were still inside the wreck of the tanker 640 meters below the sea.

"We can never be at peace as long as the threat of another massive oil spill is still there," said Gonzaga.

But the residents are hopeful that the tragedy would find closure after the scheduled removal of the remaining oil from the sunken tanker next month.

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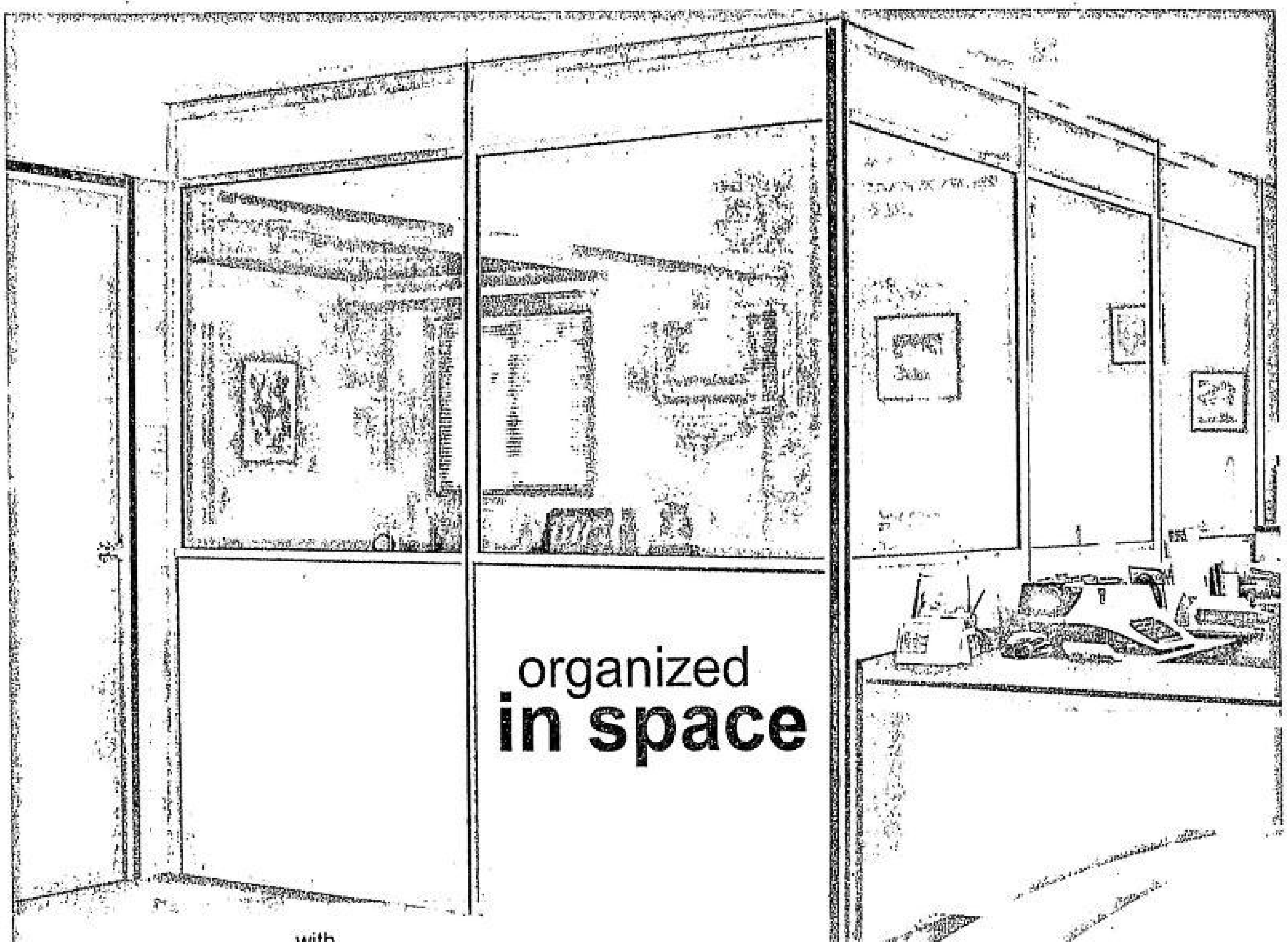

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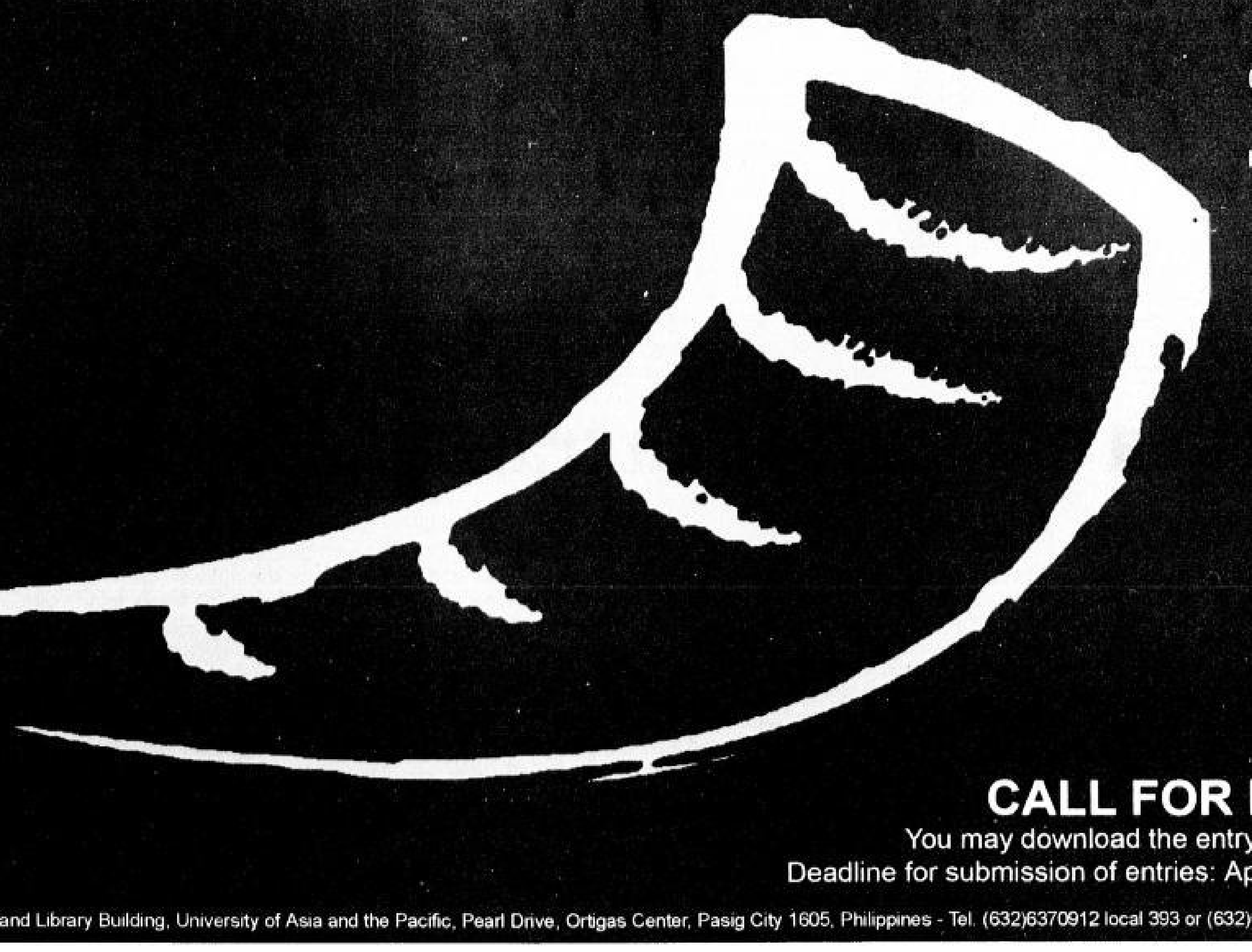

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They're supposed to be our protectors, says victim's wife

From page A1

mission that visited the area last month to look into the situation in Cagayan Valley. The mission included representatives of Bayan Muna, Karapatan, a church-based organization in Cagayan and other nongovernment organizations.

The 51-year-old Hipolito recounts vividly how the night of Dec. 13, 2006, turned into a nightmare.

"Bot (Nelson's nickname), *umay kami man* (may we come in)," the unexpected caller said thrice.

Nelson rose from his bed but was stopped by his wife. "It is Lieutenant Pascua," Nelson whispered.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"It is his voice," he replied.

Asucena walked to the door while his father lit a gas lamp. Hipolito followed his son. Before Nelson opened the door, Hipolito patted his son's back and asked who was calling him. "It is Lieutenant Pascua," Nelson repeated.

The two men stepped outside the house to meet with the visitors. Pascua was wearing a camouflage uniform. He was with five hooded men in black carrying long firearms.

'They are protectors'

"Bring that lamp back. I don't want to be in the light," Pascua told Hipolito in Ilocano.

"Cook for us," Pascua ordered. Hipolito and his wife Catalina began to comply when Pascua changed his mind and said he just wanted a cup of coffee.

Hipolito brought the glasses and a pitcher of water to the men outside, while Nelson stayed inside the house. Doubt never entered the minds of the Asucenas.

Pascua had been a friend. Nelson once sought medication for an injured leg and Pascua's soldiers provided it.

"Why should we fear them? They are soldiers. They are supposed to be our protectors," said Marifel.

After Hipolito gave some water to the visitors and went back inside the house, another voice called Nelson: "Bot, come here and get the glasses."

Nelson came out, alone.

A few seconds later, the family heard the cracking sounds of firearms being loaded followed by the terrified voice of Nelson crying, "Ay! Ay!" Rapid gunfire bursts followed.

The family rushed outside and found Nelson lying face up, his left hand on top of his right rib.

The father shrieked, grabbed his son and watched helplessly as Pascua and his men fled under cover of darkness.

Daughter Lyka came out and embraced her bleeding father, sobbing silently. Relatives and neighbors soon came to mourn the fallen youth.

Agrarian unrest

The Asucenas are among the millions of poor Filipino peasants who dream of owning at least a household farm to live on.

Barangay San Juan has blessed the Asucenas with land suitable for farming and livelihood. But since the Spanish colonial era, San Juan, like other villages in the region, has been engulfed in agitation by peasant movements seeking land for landless tillers.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed component, the New People's Army (NPA), emerged in the region as farmers stepped up demands for the redistribution of the land.

This earned the ire of the landlords who for a time had felt helpless, especially those who had property in areas considered hot spots of CPP-NPA operations—particularly in the Marag, Paco and Zinundungan triangle.

From the late '80s to the middle of the '90s these areas were declared "no man's land" as the military went after guerrillas of the CPP-NPA. Human rights abuses surged.

'Hamleting'

Military operations eased in the late '90s. "Hamleting"—a failed US strategy during the Vietnam War that called for relocating villages away from sensitive zones—was lifted between 1996 and 2000.

San Juan is located in the Zinundungan Valley, and it may have been unfortunate for Hipolito and his family to have been caught in the middle of the conflict between the military and the NPAs.

It was also this conflict that brought Hipolito to San Juan when his family was displaced by military operations in their original home in Marag.

In 1982, Hipolito Asucena saw big trouble ahead when the military again evacuated his family from San Juan to Masi, leaving behind their houses and cultivated farms.

Eight months in Masi's "concentration camp" pushed the Asucenas back to San Juan. Many children died from diseases in the evacuation area.

The elder Asucena recounted alleged abuses: Soldiers raping women, defecating in communal water catchments, beating peasants during questioning about the NPA presence.

'They beat us just the same'

"The military would ask us if we had seen NPAs in our place, and when we say 'yes,' they say that we are members of the NPA so they beat us. But when we say 'no,' they accuse us of covering up for the NPAs and then beat us just the same," said Hipolito.

There were other bitter memories. He recalled how in 1983, the military burned his house and stole his chickens.

Once, he added, he was told to go to the capital of Cagayan to be presented to the media as one of the NPA "surrenderers."

In 2003, during a resurgent anticommunist campaign, the military took pictures of the people in San Juan and asked them to write down their names on a document, purportedly to be used in clearing their records as NPA members.

'Land 6 feet under ground'

In 2004, a military squad stayed in Hipolito's house for about two months.

On Nov. 24, 2006, soldiers of the 21st IB gathered the people of San Juan in a community meeting for a "census." Here, a soldier who identified himself as Army de la Cruz declared: "Ex-Mayor Baloran owns the land being given to you by the NPAs. Your only land is six feet below the ground."

Hipolito says he felt weak and defenseless as the military tightened control of everyday life. Military abuses became rife. It was only on that tragic December night that Hipolito realized his son would give up his life for the festering land dispute.

At the age of 9, Nelson was allegedly already included in the order of battle, a list of people monitored by the Philippine Army suspected of being members of the CPP-NPA.

Most victims of extrajudicial killings were in the AFP order of battle.

On Nov. 26, 2006, Marifel had a premonition of Nelson's death when she overheard a conversation between Pascua and her husband: "Surrender to us," Pascua told Nelson after an exchange of jokes.

"What shall I surrender, sir, my plow and my bolo? I am just a farmer," Nelson replied.

"Watch out for yourself," Pascua reportedly said.

Officials deny military involvement in Asucena murder

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ILAGAN, ISABELA—ARMY OFficials in Cagayan Valley have denied that the military was involved in the murder of Nelson Asucena in Rizal, Cagayan, in December last year and accused the human rights group Karapatan of twisting the facts to harass troops.

Relatives of the 19-year-old Asucena had identified Army Lt. Marcelo Pascua as one of the men who shot and killed him.

"We already gave our answer to the [Commission on Human Rights], and we have proof to show that Lieutenant Pascua was not involved in the incident," Lt. Col. Francis Lardizabal, 21st Infantry Battalion commander, said in a text message to the INQUIRER. Lardizabal is Pascua's commanding officer.

"Karapatan has all along twisted the facts to the extent of coaching ... the parents of the victim. This is one way of harassing our troops who were able to retake [control of] the communist-influenced Zinundungan Valley. They want us to leave the area," Lardizabal said.

He assailed Karapatan for "exploiting the ignorance of [Asucena's] parents."

Brig. Gen. Romulo Supapo, 501st Infantry Brigade commander, said that Pascua was "wrongly accused" as one of the men who killed Asucena.

Supapo said Asucena, a suspected communist rebel belonging to the Cagayan Valley Regional Party Committee, was killed in a "legitimate encounter."

Pascua and Lardizabal had already answered the charges filed against them, Supapo added.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Pascua for comment on Saturday. His superiors said he was away on a military operation in Cagayan.

Antiterrorism bill 101

From page A1

likewise expected to approve it.

The antiterrorism bill penalizes any person who commits any of 12 crimes under the Revised Penal Code and other criminal laws and causes "widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace in order to coerce the government to give in to an unlawful demand."

The crimes enumerated include illegal possession of firearms, murder, rebellion, mutiny in the high seas, arson, piracy, robbery, kidnapping and serious illegal detention. Under the bill, these crimes are punishable by 40 years' imprisonment without parole.

Diokno mentions during a forum an incident two years ago in which a man took his wife and child hostage and threatened to harm them unless the government stopped the demolition of his house, causing panic in the neighborhood.

"Is that considered terrorism?" Diokno asks. "Possibly yes, which is absolutely ridiculous ... that is how difficult this bill is to understand."

Diokno, secretary general of the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG), points to the lack of standards and the subjective notion of what constitutes "fear and panic" in the antiterrorism bill, titled the "Human Security Act of 2007" (HSA).

"The crime of terrorism is defined by results," she says. "In other words, a murder has to have been committed and the murder must be found to have sown widespread fear and panic. Otherwise, what makes a regular murder a terrorist act and what makes it a murder?" she asks.

Murder under the revised penal code is punishable by reclusion perpetua—20 years to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

The security act will be enforced by an antiterrorism council composed of Cabinet members with support from the Anti-Money Laundering Council, the police and other law enforcement agencies.

Militant groups already are scrutinizing the impact of the bill in the light of concerns that have surfaced even at the outset of its introduction—in various versions—in the Senate and House of Representatives over its draconian overtones.

Offshoot of 9/11

The bill was an offshoot of 9/11, the ensuing US-led global war on terror and the emergence in the Philipines of al-Qaida-linked terrorist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf and the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah, blamed for recent deadly bombings and kidnappings in the country.

The concerns have also been fueled by the Philippine military's history of human rights abuses during the Ferdinand Marcos regime, a continuing anti-insurgency campaign that intensified following Ms Arroyo's directive to end the communist threat before the end of her term in 2010, and an opposition campaign to unseat her over alleged cheating during the 2004 presidential election.

Opposition senators led by Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Franklin Drilon, Joker Arroyo and Edgardo Angara have managed to introduce some safeguards into the antiterrorism bill.

"It was a threat to human rights when it was introduced," says Angara. "It has undergone practically an overhaul. It's a better bill [now]."

Angara said the measure was better than the Patriot Act of US President George W. Bush, or the antiterrorism measures in Britain.

"In the UK, or even here, you can go to any judge and get a warrant," says Angara.

He says only trained law enforcement agencies can enforce the Philippines' antiterrorism act. "No Tom, Dick or Harry of a judge can issue a warrant," he says, pointing out that this will be the responsibility of the Court of Appeals.

He also says that blunders in the implementation of the law can result in 10 to 12 years' imprisonment of the enforcing authority. He says the "Hello Garci" wiretapping controversy will now be history because of built-in safeguards in intelligence eavesdropping.

Pimentel's 98 amendments

Pimentel introduced 98 amendments to the Senate version of the bill. Of these, 96 were approved. Now, says the Senate minority leader, the human security act is "a little more humane."

Among the amendments adopted were:

- Requiring a show of probable cause before anyone is tagged a terrorist.
- Approval by the Court of Appeals before police could place people under surveillance or tap their telephones, e-mails and other communications.
- Requiring the police to immediately bring an arrested person before a judicial authority (whose meaning was expanded to include human rights officials to make sure that there is always a check on police abuses right from the moment the arrested person is picked up).
- Exempting journalists and their sources from making compulsory disclosures to the police or judicial authorities, for that matter, lawyers and their clients, doctors and their patients as well.
- Compelling police to report to judicial authorities the results of their surveillance.
- Compensating victims of illegal or unfounded arrests P500,000 a day for wrongful detention.
- Making the law effective two months after the May elections and suspending its effectivity one month before and two months after every election.

"In any event, I also know from experience that no matter how good a law is, it may be abused," says Pimentel, who was imprisoned during the martial law years.

'Basic fear'

"That's my basic fear. And it is not an empty one, considering the experience of our people. We are not legislating in a vacuum. We have to input the fears and the apprehensions of our people into the enactment of laws that we craft.

"Knowing then that illegal arrests are prohibited by the Constitution and the Revised Penal Code and still they happen—all this without any antiterror law, I can only hope for the best," says Pimentel.

"I would have wanted that the acts now punished as terrorism, since they are already penalized in the Revised Penal Code, be punished under the code or under the special laws that define certain crimes that are included as predicate offenses in the HSA," he says.

"Had my idea been adopted, there would be less danger of abuse and less chance that our people's rights would be violated under the pretext of fighting terrorism," says Pimentel.

'It's sufficient'

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, author of the antiterror bill, expressed satisfaction that the bill meets the needs of national security. "As far as I am concerned, it's sufficient. We will see if it's enough after it's implemented. You can never tell. Society is dynamic."

Enrile, defense minister under the late dictator Marcos, says there's one item in the bill that he wants refined. He says the P500,000 fine for every day of wrongful detention of a suspect is too heavy. He says it should be reduced to P50,000.

He says he agreed to Pimentel's proposal just to end the long debate. "We can amend it. We'll see first if there's grounds to amend it."

Jamby's objection

But Sen. Anna Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal remains opposed and plans to question the bill before the Supreme Court, pointing to some provisions which she describes as unconstitutional.

"The bill is not about national security because we don't have terrorism problems," says Madrigal. She points out that what the nation needs is tighter implementation of existing laws and more intelligence gathering. "The bill is about legitimizing Gloria Arroyo's muzzling her political enemies."

She points to the so-called "Tagaytay 5"—suspected communist insurgents who were arrested for allegedly attempting to sow terror during the May 1 celebration last year—and the case of party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran who is facing rebellion charges.

"They are in jail on mere suspicion," she says. "If they say you look like a terrorist, they can detain you."

Melo report: Saga of a breach in transparency

From page A1

The limited edition of the report amounts to the descent of a curtain of censorship over a public document involving the most important current issue of public interest, the sanctity of human life, the responsibility of the state to protect the liberties of its citizens of whatever political belief and ensure the rule of law.

The Melo report has now acquired the dubious distinction of joining the notorious company of the index of banned books of the medieval Holy Inquisition, issued by the Catholic Church to insulate its members from heresy.

Representatives of the EU and the UN are to receive their copies today. The administration has asked these international institutions to assist it in going to the bottom of the killings and put an end to the still unabated carnage.

The government has withheld the 89-page report since the commission headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo submitted it to President Arroyo in January, after five months of hearings.

They are keen to help, but the President has sought their intervention more as a public relations gesture to burnish its international image after her government has come under scathing criticism from the EU and UN human rights organs over rampant human rights violation. These institutions have pressed for copies of the report, in order to assist the Philippine government in a transparent inquiry.

In January, the President instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs to request the EU to send investigators to assist the commission in its work. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita has said the President supported the UN inquiry "for the purpose of transparency, to show them that the government is doing everything to address the killings."

In response to an earlier Philippine request, the UN sent Philip Alston, its special rapporteur on human rights, on a fact-finding mission to Manila.

Eneko Landabunu, director general for external relations of the European Commission, said in pressing for a copy of the report, that "our position is, of course, to support all efforts made by the government in order to identify the perpetrators and to prevent further killings."

Not worth anything

Alston has told the government that the Melo report "would not be worth anything unless it means something to the people of the Philippines" and to the people "who can make things happen." The issues they have raised put the government on the spot on whether it is serious with its requests for UN-EU intervention.

Thus, the intervention, denounced as meddling in Philippine domestic affairs by a recently reawakened Filipino nationalist, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, is a false issue.

The key issue that is of primary importance to the Filipino people is whether UN-EU intervention will lead to the end of the killings, and the prosecution of those responsible.

The report has a saga of concealment, deception and breaches of transparency since the commission submitted its report to President Arroyo in January.

Cover-up

Since January, the government has kept the report from the media. I smelled a rat of a cover-up when the government continued to suppress it and fed the media only with bits of information. What passed for details included briefings from Melo who said the "majority of the victims were leftist-activist militants," the suspects were the military, but "We don't want to tag the whole military establishment, elements of the military who were allowed to do their thing without supervision from higher officers."

Intriguing was his statement to the press that retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other military commanders be "held responsible" for the executions in their areas of assignment under the doctrine of command responsibility. This is a key portion of the report that the public is interested to know and that indicates what the administration intends to do with Palparan. Further obfuscation and lame explanations followed.

Shifting the blame

Ermita said the report "is not yet complete," adding that the Melo Commission could not come up with a comprehensive report because there is no participation—by design, I think—by th leftist organizations," a case o shifting the blame to the victims.

Ermita said he was worried tha the report was based on testimon mainly by police and military authorities and might be misinterpreted if "such a one-sided repor will be released to the public."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzale further blurred the picture when h suggested the UN rapporteur, Alston, "may have been brainwashed by the Left after he had met the representatives first before meetin government authorities.

The President gave National S curity Adviser Norberto Gonzal the go-ahead on Feb. 13 to releas the report to the UN and EU. He sa on the report, deciding to release i today. He said it had taken him time to implement the Presiden order to make "some transmittal to the offices of Ermita and Pre Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

The Institute of Internal Auditors Philippines (IIAP)

FILIPINOS REACHING THE TOP GLOBALLY

TOP 5 & TOP 25 GLOBAL CIAS

Global Top 5

Paete

Oblepias

Mariscotes

Mirafuentes

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE AWARDEES

Global Top 25

Aldave

Rafael

Lim

CERTIFICATE OF HONOR AWARDEES

The Philippines has once again competed proudly in the global arena of professional certifications.

In the global qualifying tests held last November 2006, more than thirty-one thousand (31,000) candidates sat for the examinations for the **"Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)"**, for the **"Certification on Control Self Assessment (CCSA)"**, and for the **"Certified Financial Services Auditor (CFSA)"**, which were conducted simultaneously in various exam sites worldwide. From this batch of 31,000 there were approximately four thousand candidates who successfully passed. Among them are Filipino candidates who proudly emerged to be among the **Global Topnotchers**. It is not by mere chance that among the November 2006 global Top 5 CIAs & Excellence Awardees, four (4) of them are Filipinos, and among the global Top 25 CIAs & Honor Awardees, three (3) of them are also Filipinos.

Here are the most recent juicy details about the Philippine candidates of November 2006. We see the names of seven (7) individuals who were qualified by IIA Inc. International Board of Regents to be the recipient of the prestigious William S. Smith Excellence Awards and Honor Awards, owing to their outstanding performance vis-à-vis the thousands of candidates who sat for the CIA exams worldwide. These Nov. 2006 William Smith awardees are:

- **Excellence Awards:** This means that in addition to successfully completing the CIA exam in one sitting, the individual has also submitted **one of the 5 best** exam papers following that of the Gold Medalist.
    1. Chris M. Paete (PNOC – EDC);
    2. Sarah Camille S. Oblepias (SGV & Co.);
    3. Ferdinand Mark B. Mariscotes (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas)
    4. Pol B. Mirafuentes (PNOC – EDC);

- **Honor Awards:** This means that in addition to successfully completing the CIA exam in one sitting, the individual has also submitted **one of the 25 best** exam papers following those of the Gold Medalist and the five Certificate of Excellence recipients.
    1. Henry B. Aldave V (Punongbayan & Araullo);
    2. Mark Cyril Banawa Rafael (Punongbayan & Araullo);
    3. Vima Marie Pia Lim (SGV & Co.)

These individuals will be initially acknowledged during IIA-P's first General Membership Meeting on February 19, 2007, 6:00 PM at the Hotel Intercon-Makati with the Honorable Senate President Manny Villar as the guest speaker. They will be again honored in a traditional CIA Testimonial Dinner, to be held also at the Hotel Intercon-Makati, details of which are being coordinated by the IIA-P Executive Director Ms. Rodelyn Chan Lee.

I would say that there has been a very favorable and impressive trend of ***Filipinos reaching the Top*** over the last seven years. If we may briefly recall, in November 2005, Duchess Marie Blancia Cruz was a Global Top 1 CIA as she received the William S. Smith Gold Medal Award. In May 2004, Duke Bajenting was the first Filipino to become the Global Top 1 CIA, and received the W. S. Smith Gold Medal Award. Indeed, a Duke and Duchess, leading the royal entourage of Philippine CIA topnotchers. Way back in November 2000, Garry Peterson K. Ng was the first Filipino who became one of the Global Top 5 CIAs & Excellence Awardees. There are nineteen more Philippine CIAs who likewise belong to the global Top 5 and global Top 25, from May 2001 thru May 2006, namely Norman Gabriel, Aileen Aviso, Marc Lenin Quintana, Brian Athaide, Theta Marbella, Melanie Oteyza, Jesse Teo, Joseph Ostermann, Steve Damazo, Elvira Soriano, Jonathan Marquez, Chris Joan Pua, Kathleen Aton-Osias, Francisco Sarmiento Jr., Emmanuel Manalo, Marichu Moratalla, Rolando Soliven,

Celebrating Filipino excellence in the Internal Audit profession:
7 Global Topnotchers, 174 new passers to be recognized in today's First General Membership Meeting of IIA Phils. to be graced by the Honorable Senate President Manny Villar

And then in 2006, the IIA Philippines received from the IIA, Inc. Int'l Board of Regents the prestigious **"2005 Lawrence B. Sawyer Award"** in recognition of IIA Philippines' outstanding contribution to the Certified Internal Auditor program. ***(Continued down below)***

www.iia-p.org

List of Successful Examinees for the November 2006 Examinations

Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)

1	AALA	Donabel	Reyes	United Coconut Planters Bank
2	ABAD	Carloui	Alnas	FAL Group
3	ABRIGO	Federico Jr.	Relayo	Punongbayan & Araullo
4	AFRICA	Louvie	Choy	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
5	AGLIAM	Jacqueline	Pascua	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
6	ALBANO	Arnel	Maliwanag	SGV & Co.
7	ALCANTARA	Cynthia	Rasay	University of the East
8	ALDAVE	Henry V	Borja	Punongbayan & Araullo
9	ALEJANDRIA	Amando III	Pascua	DILG
10	ALLID	Marissa	Comilang	Bank of the Philippine Islands
11	ALVAREZ	Alfonso	Layson	Asian Development Bank
12	ARCEO	Herminio Jr.	Alam	SM, Inc.
13	ARCO	Rizalina Angela	Vergel De Dios	CL Manabat & Co.
14	ARENAS	George	Bitbit	Maybank Philippines, Inc.
15	ASUNCION	Giancarlo	Dayrit	Ayala Land Inc.
16	ATIENZA	Aydin	Bernardo	Global Santa Fe Drilling Operations
17	BABALO	Alan	Juada	AFPSLAI
18	BACARRA	Maria Chevy Adaliz	Villarama	Petron Corporation
19	BALDRES	Elna	Norte	Ginebra San Miguel, Inc
20	BARGAMENTO	Douwe Francis	Paradero	University of San Carlos
21	BARING	Myra	Santos	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.
22	BASILIO	Lorenz Jun	Jerusalem	Jaka Investments Corp.
23	BATO	Shirley	Contreras	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
24	BAYLON	Maria Dionelle	Sansano	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
25	BINAG	Jean Khristy	Guia	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
26	BOBIS	Gladys	Cariaga	Toyota Motor Philippines Corp.
27	BOOC	Jerilee Kay	Uy	Xlibris Philippines, Inc.
28	BOTE	Blossom Faith	Serrano	Smart Communications, Inc.
29	CABELLON	Carlito	Caballero	Fairchild Semiconductor
30	CABIAO	Anthony	Castro	Cypress Seminconductor
31	CAÑETE	Joseph	Castillo	China Banking Corporation
32	CELLACAY	Agerio		Shell Shared Services, Asia-BV
33	CHU	Edison John	Uy	University of San Carlos
34	CHUA	Katherine Rose	Kho	CL Manabat & Co.
35	CHUA	Mary Grace	Bautista	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
36	CLARITO	Valfre	Lorenzo	San Miguel Corp.
37	CONDICION	Josefa	Samonte	Dacon Corporation
38	CORDOVA	Gisselle	Beatrice	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.
39	CRUZ	Ferdinand Mark	Fuentes	AMA Computer College
40	CUETO	Lou Hazel	Rojas	TESDA
41	DACYON	Xiela Marie	Mina	Punongbayan & Araullo
42	DALISAY	Lorena	Macahilig	Isla Lipana & Co.
43	DANIEL	Luliza	Macaraya	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
44	DARANG	Jeffrey	Perez	Bank of the Philippine Islands
45	DARUSIN	Annie	Aguilo	Santa Isabelle Corporation
46	DE CASTRO	Ma. Cristina	Ramos	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
47	DEMARILLAS	Mario	Base	Integrated Microelectronics Inc.
48	DIAZ	Mary Caroline	Taligatos	Isla Lipana & Co.
49	DIMAANDAL	Maria Bernadette	Fajilan	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.
50	DINZON	Darwin	Ambanan	Ateneo de Davao University
51	DUMPIT	Ginalyn	Andrada	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co
52	ENRIQUEZ	Cristina	Castro	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
53	ESGUERRA	Ana Janice	Pante	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd.
54	ESTAÑO	Jane	Coquilla	Diaz Murillo Dalupan & Co.
55	FADRIGON	Geraldine	Baisa	San Miguel Corp.
56	FAIGAO	Richard	Paris	Philam Savings Bank, Inc.
57	FERNANDEZ	Jane	Casia	Isla Lipana & Co.
58	FLORES	Adolito	Ylanan	Norkis Trading & Co., Inc.
59	FLORES	Belinda	Dinolan	Pink Aura Salon & Wellness Center
60	FLORES	Ina Angela	T.	Chevron Holdings Inc.
61	FLORES	Melvin	Camacho	Cebu Pacific Air
62	GALANG	Myracris	Gines	
63	GARCIA	Marc Arthur	Cordial	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
64	GARROVILLAS	Blessie	Soriano	Asian Development Bank
65	GATDULA	Annabel	Nacua	Aboitiz & Co., Inc.
66	GAVINO	Ronielyn	Lata	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
67	GAYNILO	Raymond	Feredo	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
68	GO	Chloe Chizu	Go-Cedenio	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd.
69	GOPENGCO	Miguel Cezar	Remorozo	Jaka Investments Corp.
70	HERMOSO	Merven	Gegona	Aboitiz & Company, Inc.
71	HERNANDEZ	Analy	Perez	CADP Group Corporation
72	IBASCO	Marivic	Puna	Toyota Motor Philippines Corp.
73	JAVIER	Aldrin	Quiocho	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
74	JIAO	Conyfel	Dimaclid	Philippine Rice Research Institute
75	JIAO	Joyce Dominique	Jose	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
76	JOSE	Arlene	Arellano	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.
77	JUMIG	Michelle	Cuizon	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
78	KABIGTING	Tristan John	Arceo	Punongbayan & Araullo
79	LEE	Robin	Ang	
80	LIM	Goldy	Go	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd.
81	LIM	Vima Marie	Pia	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
82	LONTOK	Lea Katrina	Angeles	Punongbayan & Araullo
83	LU	Sherwin Bryan	Lao	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte. Ltd.
84	LUCENA	Rodina	Cruz	Banco De Oro Universal Bank
85	MACAY	William Jr.	Esguerra	Mindbox Solutions Corporation
86	MACHICA	Michael	Ayhon	Ma Machica Accounting Firm
87	MALAPITAN	Alvin	Gamis	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.
88	MALUPING	Onnasis	Castillo	Jaka Investments Corp.
89	MANABAT	Shiela Marie	Mina	
90	MANINGO	Gary	Villanueva	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
91	MARAON	Querube	Bayawa	Mehitabel Inc.
92	MARISCOTES	Ferdinand Mark	Bonpua	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
93	MAROHOM	Gretchen	Claver	Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc.
94	MARTINEZ	Ryan Alfred	Santillan	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd
95	MATIRA	Erenia	Martinez	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
96	MEJIA	Jesusa Angela	Victorino	San Miguel Corp.
97	MENDOZA	Alvin	Custodio	Paysetter Int'l. Inc.
98	MENDOZA	Ramelene	Lacao	
99	MENDOZA	Richel	Digueño	CADP Group Corporation
100	MILAN	Deney Bryan	Sandalo	CBK Power Company Limited
101	MILLAN	Maria-Ann Lourdes	Roque	Bank of the Philippine Islands
102	MIRAFUENTES	Pol	Bolotaolo	PNOC - Energy Dev't. Corp.
103	MIRANDA	Mylene Joy	Santiago	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.
104	MIRANDA	Sarah Mylene	Leaño	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
105	MONCAYO	Carlos Aparacion	Cajulis	Unilever Phils., Inc.
106	MORALES	Desiree	Dioquino	PAGCOR
107	NAOE	Richlyn Joy	Apan	Shell Shared Services (Asia) B.V.
108	NAVARRO	Diana Lou	Elviña	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
109	NGO	Jethro Joseph	Nuñeza	San Miguel Corp. - Beer Division
110	OBLEPIAS	Sarah Camille	San Diego	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
111	OBREGON	Flor Ann Mae	Dohiling	Diaz Murillo Dalupan & Co.
112	OCAMPO	Elizabeth	Perez	Croma Medic Inc.
113	OCAMPO	Theresa	Mungcal	Extraordinary Development Corp.
114	OGINO	Yuichiro		Asian Development Bank
115	OJEDA	Gina	Litonjua	Phil Batteries, Inc.
116	OLIVEROS	Maria Luisa	Ube	Polytechnic University of the Phils.
117	ORDOVEZA	Francis Rafael	Halili	Jaka Investments Corp.
118	PADUA	Maria Socorro	Manansala	Punongbayan & Araullo
119	PAETE	Chris	Mora	PNOC - Energy Dev't. Corp.
120	PAPA	Guinhawa	Bautista	Zuellig Pharma Phils.
121	PATALINJUG	Cristina	Reducto	Wealth Development Bank
122	PEREZ	Delsa	Abuel	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
123	PO	Lynneth	Lim	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
124	POTOT	Ariel	Berdon	University of San Carlos
125	PRUDENTE	Reinier Rizalino	Portillo	Punongbayan & Araullo
126	RAFAEL	Mark Cyril	Banawa	Punongbayan & Araullo
127	RAMOS	Benjamin Jr.	Labasen	Allied Banking Corporation
128	REBADAVIA	Anna Eloisa	Cariaga	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
129	RECTO	Leonora	Lupig	Rustan Supercenters Inc.
130	REFORMA	Gleth Donald	Langones	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
131	REMO	Nerissa	Ravela	Cypress Seminconductor- ROHQ
132	RICAFRENTE	Charline	Loyola	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
133	RIOFLORIDO	Christian	Marañon	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
134	RIVERA	Mark Joseph	Alejo	Punongbayan & Araullo
135	ROBILLOS	Quirino Jr.	Ballener	Department of Health
136	ROBISO	Lioba	Baltazar	Bureau of the Treasury
137	RONDARIO	Michael Ian		Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
138	SABLAY	Marita	Fariscal	Resources & Investments Corp. House
139	SALINAS	Nitze Belle	Yap	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
140	SALVADOR	Carolyn	Ceñal	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
141	SANCHEZ	Joffrey Elpidio	Angel	Shell Shared Services (Asia) B.V.
142	SANTOS	Michelle Kara	Tono	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
143	SARZUELO	Jesus Jr.	Areglo	Central Colleges of the Philippines
144	SECRETARIO	Alden	Dilao	Int'l Institute of Rural Reconstruction
145	SIO	John Saint Michael	Castillo	Isla Lipana & Co.
146	SISON	Alina	Corillo	Sison Corillo Parone & Co.
147	SISON	Neil	Uy	Sison Corillo Parone & Co.
148	SO CHAN	Mark Philip	Agupitan	Punongbayan & Araullo
149	STA. MARIA	Michelle	Santos	National Transmission Corp.
150	SUAREZ	Michael	Hernandez	
151	SUSON	Marivale	Plete	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
152	SYLIM	Anita	Dugay	PAGCOR
153	TAN	Gayle Marianne	Sunbanun	CL Manabat & Co.
154	TAN	Jeffrey Robert	Tan Lee	Punongbayan & Araullo
155	TANDOC	Bismarck Onofre	Diaz	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd.
156	TAYAG	Princess Marie	Angeles	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.
157	TIMTIMAN	Edalin	Altar	Monde Nissin Corporation
158	TIU	Geraldine	Jamora	United Coconut Planters Bank
159	TRISTEZA	May	Dumagco	Philippine Seven Corp.
160	TUANQUI	Eric	Villagomez	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
161	TUANQUI	Rosario	De Luna	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
162	TYAPON	Irene	N.	First Metro Ins. Agency Inc.
163	UNO	Phoebe Grace	Gumapon	Punongbayan & Araullo
164	UNTALAN	Marilou	Untalan	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.
165	VISCAYA	Djarenne	Seralde	Universal Robina Corp.
166	WILLIS	Ginneson	Damagen	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
167	YABIS	Bernardino Jr.	Talosig	Cuestan Law Office
168	YAN	Eric	Cabatay	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
169	YAP	Gregory Vincent	Ang	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.
170	YAP	Josephine	Gregorio	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
171	YNGSON	Rona Marie	Pabicon	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.

Certification in Control Self Assessment (CCSA)

1	ASUNCION	Giancarlo	Dayrit	Ayala Land, Inc.
2	LACERNA	Crismar	Macasaet	First Philippine Holdings Corp.
3	NACIONAL	Mariane	Mislang	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.
4	SIY	Nicholas	Uy	Philippine Airlines
5	GALLEGO	Michael	Cabical	Cemex

Certified Financial Services Auditor (CFSA)

1	AGUILA	Maria Cristina	Ibe	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
2	CACACHO	Gremar	T.	KPMG Manabat Sanagustin & Co.
3	CONCEPCION	Nener	Gatchalian	Allied Banking Corp.
4	SEBALLE	Virgilio	Jamito	Premiere Development Bank
5	SORIANO	Elvira	Digamon	United Coconut Planters Bank

Locally, the IIAP measures the quality of the Philippine candidates' results through the average pass rates per batch. The average pass rates for the November 2006 batch are as follows:

- CFSA / Certified Financial Services Auditor: 100% ;
- CCSA/ Certification on Controls Self Assessment: 63%;
- CIA/ Certified Internal Auditor: average pass rates of 78% Part1; 75% Part2; 73% Part3; and 35% Part4;
- This year, for the first time, the Philippine banking industry registered a high turnout and delivered very good CIA results, generally surpassing the global average pass rates.
- One candidate, Giancarlo Dayrit Asuncion, currently with Ayala Land Inc., was able to hurdle two certification exams **in just one sitting** last November 2006, and Gian is now a successful CIA and CCSA. We excitedly say, 'this is first in the history of Philippine CIAs!'

On behalf of the IIA,Inc. International Board of Regents, Ms. Patricia Brame (IIA, Inc. Director of the Certifications Department), Mr. Alexander Cordero,CIA and Mr. Yashi Tecson,CIA (both our Deputy CIA Country Coordinators for Manila and Cebu), and the Board of Directors and Officers of the IIA Philippines, we are happy to present to you the individual names of the CIA/ CCSA/ CFSA Passers from the November 2006 global certification examinations. We now have about 700 Philippine CIAs.

We praise God Almighty for this bountiful harvest, and we congratulate our 'Global Topnotchers', each of our new CIAs, CFSAs, CCSAs, their Corporate Sponsors, the mentors during the CIA seminars, Secretariat staff, CIA proctors who served during the examinations at the Manila site and Cebu site, the IIAP Board and Officers, the Certifications Committee, and the families who all share in the joy of this laudable achievement.

Cheers, and as we in IIAP and the CIAs would usually say, ***"the ultimate glory belongs to God!"***

– Edel Mary D. Vegamora, CPA, CIA
CIA Country Coordinator – Phils.

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Recto, Pichay: Bet needs at least ₱120M

From page A1

As of Feb. 16, there were 43,817,985 registered voters in the country, according to the Election and Barangay Affairs Department of the Comelec.

The head of the department said the number of voters would still go up because the 43.8 million was based on the reports of 1,096 election officers. Some 550 election officers have yet to submit their reports.

P200 million for admin bet

Given the archipelagic nature of the country, Pichay said the campaign budget of P200 million for each administration senatorial candidate would "tremendously increase" his or her chances of reaching out to the widest audience possible, and thus ensure his or her victory.

"That's the reality. So you cannot win a senatorial election if you're poor. What if in the middle of the game nobody wants to contribute anymore? We have to change the system, I know, that's why I'm running for senator," he said.

Pichay said he had so far raised P20 million.

TV ads eat most of budget

Recto and Pichay complained that a huge chunk of the campaign budget went to television advertisements. Pichay put it at 70 percent.

Recto has raised P25 million from his family and some businessmen.

"I will raise more. It's so expensive to place TV ads. We're contributing to the trust fund of the Lopez family (which owns ABS-CBN) and the (Gozon, Duavit and Jimenez) families (who control GMA 7)," he said.

Recto said a senatorial candidate was allowed to place a total of 120 minutes in TV and radio ads plus another 120 minutes for party ads.

The going rate for prime-time placements is about P200,000 for a 30-second TV ad on GMA 7 and about P180,000 on ABS-CBN, according to Pichay.

Recto said the strong peso, 10-year-high stock market and low interest rates could translate into more funds for the candidates, particularly those belonging to the ruling coalition.

Top corporations

He said the top corporations and small and medium enterprises were already reaping the benefits of the fiscal reform programs instituted by the Arroyo administration, so they would naturally go for allies of the President.

Recto was one of the authors of the Senate measure that increased the value-added tax by two percentage points.

"I'm sure the businessmen don't want chaos. Our candidates who still lack funds, I'm sure they (businessmen) will contribute to them," said Recto, when asked to confirm that Team Unity members had no problem raising funds.

Pichay does not subscribe to the statement that the support of Binondo Chinese businessmen could drastically increase one's chances of winning in the senatorial race.

"The Chinese always contribute to both sides," he said. "A million for you, a million for me, and everybody is happy."

Recto and Pichay chided San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor Ejercito, campaign manager of the Genuine Opposition's senatorial slate, for saying that GO's financial woes were starting to affect its campaign sorties.

The two administration candidates said Ejercito's claim was "pure gimmickry."

The fund shortage prompted GO to postpone campaigning in Iloilo, Antique and Capiz over the weekend.

Reprisal

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, one of GO's candidates, said money was indeed a problem in the opposition camp.

"Funds are hard to come by not because of a lack of enthusiasm and support from fund contributors. It is more of fear of reprisals from the administration, which they say has the propensity to make life and business difficult for them if they are found to be helping the opposition," he said.

Lacson said the administration had an "almost bottomless source of funds."

Recto said he would only spend what he raised. "I can't borrow money for my campaign, or sell my assets."

For instance, if he had about 50 relatives he would ask them to shell out P500,000 or P1 million each. "That's big money," he said.

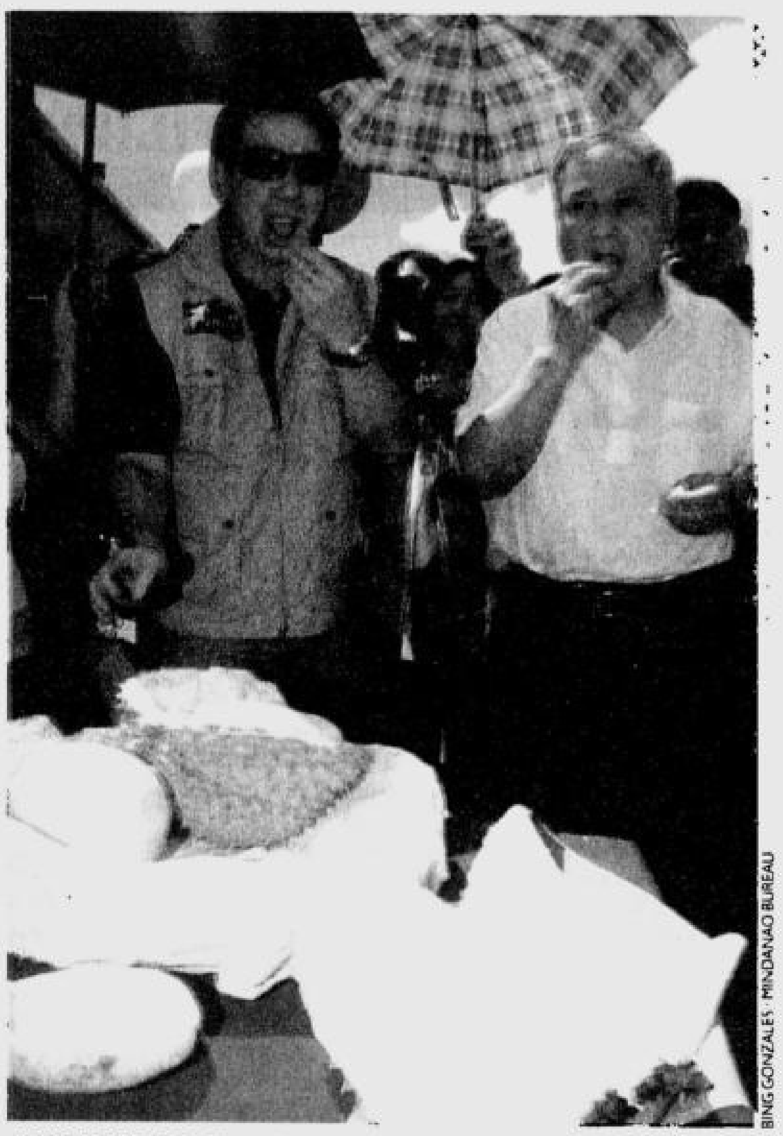
He said he could not speak for the administration's own fundraisers who are also knocking on the doors of businessmen and wealthy families.

"I don't know, I'm sure they do," Recto said.

Reli German, Team Unity's campaign director, said the coalition had decided to pay for the airfare and hotel accommodations of each senatorial candidate and an aide.

All expenses related to sorties of the entire slate will also be covered by its funds, he said.

But the candidates will have to pay for their own posters, streamers, stickers and other campaign paraphernalia, according to German.



BING GONZALES · MINDANAO BUREAU

DURIAN BREAK. Team Unity reelectionists Ralph Recto and Joker Arroyo break away from their campaign sorties to take a bite of the famous durian at a fruit stall in Davao City Sunday.

Allow Erap to campaign, opposition asks Sandiganbayan

From page A1

still remains a major political force in the country.

Yesterday, he was given permission to visit his mother, who is 102, at her home at North Greenhills in San Juan. He was flown there by helicopter from his Tanay rest house, where he is detained.

Scores of supporters and opposition candidates seeking Estrada's endorsement for their candidacies had managed to proceed to the house even before his arrival.

The area around the house was under tight security following claims by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales that communist rebels were planning to assassinate the former President.

The Estrada camp, however, claimed the plot was a government ploy to stop him from seeing opposition candidates as the campaign season got underway.

Media access

Tamano said Estrada's lawyers will ask the court to lift the travel and media ban against Estrada. He said they would also ask that Estrada be allowed to move from Tanay to his San Juan home.

"Media should have access to him," he told reporters. "He's a national figure ... (and) he should be free to campaign," Tamano said.

Tamano said that while the opposition understood the police restrictions on Estrada's movements, they knew that the orders came from "up above."

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, one of the first opposition senatorial candidates to see Estrada, also questioned the timing of the government in holding Estrada incommunicado.

"The one tightening the screws on Estrada is not the graft court but the executive department. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to read between the lines," he said.

During their meeting with Estrada, the opposition senatorial candidates sought the former President's blessings. They also turned the occasion into an opportunity to voice their grievances over the alleged prospects of widespread cheating in the May elections.

No less than Estrada expressed concern over the "changing face of electoral fraud" during his luncheon meeting with nine candidates, they later said.

The opposition appeared so concerned about the possibility of massive cheating that it formed an "antifraud committee" to be chaired by Sen. Sergio "Serge" Osmeña III.

Face of poll fraud changing

"He is right—the face of electoral fraud is changing," said Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III during the GO press conference at nearby Club Filipino, echoing what they reported was the overriding concern of the former President.

All the GO senatorial candidates except for Senate President Manuel Villar, Sen. Francisco Pangilinan and detained Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV paid Estrada a visit.

Also present were Senators Franklin Drilon, Alfredo Lim and Osmeña, and San Juan Rep. Ronaldo Zamora.

"Erap is worth more than money," said outgoing Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano.

'Estrada factor'

Claiming an evident lack of campaign funds, the GO candidates appeared to be banking on the "Estrada factor" to help boost their candidacies.

This is why GO people prefer his presence on the campaign trail, unlike the administration candidates who, the GO candidates said, preferred that President Macapagal-Arroyo just gave them money instead of raising their hands during rallies.

Despite the tight police security, Cayetano and the eight other candidates were allowed to take turns having their pictures taken with Estrada.

At one point in the afternoon, Estrada showed up by the window and alternately raised the hands of Cayetano, Pimentel and former Sen. Loren Legarda.

Each of the candidates was also asked to do a one-minute video clip to be shown through roving vans around the country. Each clip was to present candidates introducing themselves and telling the people why they deserved to be in the Senate.

During the San Juan gathering, Estrada asked the party to enlist the support of volunteer lawyers to help safeguard the votes in the provincial and city levels, and paralegal people for the municipal level, according to lawyer Rufus Rodriguez, legal counsel for Estrada.

"They're really preparing for cheating in the congressional level where (Ms Arroyo's) position is in danger because of impeachment," Cayetano said, referring to the need for the administration to control the Lower House to prevent another impeachment complaint.

Cheaters under surveillance

This early, the newly formed antifraud committee was already receiving reports and suggestions on how to prevent cheating in different areas, said former Sen. Ernesto Maceda.

"The people who are planning to cheat are already under surveillance," he said.

Describing herself as a victim of vicious cheating, Legarda outlined the different "stages, generations of fraud" she said she experienced when she ran as the late presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s running mate in 2004.

Besides the alleged doctoring of election returns and certificates of canvass, those behind the alleged fraud sneaked fake ERs into the House of Representatives several months after the May 2004 elections, she said.

"There's even a post-election fraud," she said in Filipino. "But my effort, money and pain were not wasted. If I didn't file the protest, we would not have had proof of the history of this cheating, of what really happened in the election of 2004."

'Manifestations of cheating'

For the coming election, GO candidates raised the alarm over "early manifestations of cheating."

Leading their list is the appearance of one Jose Pepito "Peter" Cayetano.

Representative Cayetano and his party mates are convinced that the namesake was fielded solely to derail his candidacy. *(See story on Page A12.)*

Maceda complained about the Commission on Elections' alleged unfair implementation of the rules on campaign posters.

"If they would remove posters, they should remove all posters, not just the already very few posters of the opposition," he said.

Tamano said the fact that Estrada was being kept from the opposition candidates and leaders and even the media indicated that the administration never meant to work for fair and honest elections.

With a report from AFP

Our "Guy"
VIC MAGSAYSAY
sa SENADO
Paid For By Friends of VIC MAGSAYSAY

Angara feels sure he won't get cheated

From page A1

been enhanced by his decision to run under the administration ticket because this was an assurance that his votes would be "counted."

In an interview with INQUIRER editors Thursday night, Angara related how he was ribbed by his colleagues in the judicial and academic circles about his joining Malacañang's Team Unity slate.

"They said, 'Thank God, you will not be cheated.' It's quite cynical but realistic," said Angara.

By siding with the administration, Angara said, "you'll be sure your votes will be counted."

Angara claimed to have prodded show biz icon Fernando Poe Jr. to lead the opposition in the 2004 presidential election. Poe died in December that year amid accusations by his political allies that President Macapagal-Arroyo had cheated massively to prevent his victory.

Angara apparently continues to believe that Poe was robbed of victory at the polls. He was reported to have said last week that the late movie king would have been the country's president today had he not been cheated.

Bonding with former foes

Asked by the INQUIRER if he and fellow former oppositionists ex-Senators Vicente Sotto III and Tessie Aquino-Oreta now formally recognized the legitimacy of Ms Arroyo's term, Angara said there was no need to make a formal declaration.

Although ostracized by his peers in the opposition for his switchover, Angara—who felt bad his name was never considered when the opposition drafted its ticket—appeared to have found a new home in the shadow of Malacañang.

As Team Unity members, he, Sotto and Oreta are now bonding with former foes.

No one votes straight

Asked if he would vote straight Team Unity in the May 14 polls, Angara said: "Please don't ask me that."

He noted that Filipinos had historically voted for a mixed slate in senatorial elections.

Aside from being assured that his votes would be counted, Angara said the administration's political machinery, particularly its control of the local government network, was another advantage for a candidate running with the ruling party.

'She brings in the goods'

"Based on surveys, the hardcore opposition is only 20 percent, which is the same as the administration (loyalists). They will wash in the end and what will count is the local organization," said Angara. "Gloria can bring out the mayors and governors. When she goes, she brings ... thousands of sacks of goodies, of rice, whatever."

On his own, as head of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Angara said he could count not only on the LDP machinery for base support but also on parallel organizations of University of the Philippines alumni, lawyers and teachers.

CGFNS: What it is all about

INQUIRER PHOTO

FILIPINO nurses who passed the 2006 board exams now face a crisis.

THE COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS International) is a United States-based, non-profit organization internationally recognized as an authority on credentials evaluation of nurses and healthcare professionals worldwide.

The organization ensures that nurses and other healthcare professionals educated in countries other than the United States meet licensure, immigration and other practice requirements in the United States.

A division of CGFNS International, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions, administers the VisaScreen program.

The VisaScreen program is a federally approved screening program for foreign health workers seeking an occupational visa in the United States.

Section 343 of the US Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 provides that: "An alien seeking admission for employment as healthcare worker is required to present credentials (from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools or the equivalent) verifying the alien's training, licensing and experience and also appropriate competency in English."

VisaScreen includes an educational review, a licensure review, English language skills assessment and passage of one of two approved examinations for registered nurses (CGFNS International Qualifying exam or the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses [NCLEX-RN]).

A majority of the states require foreign nurses to pass the CGFNS before taking the NCLEX-RN. They are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming.

One of the "frequently asked questions" on the CGFNS website pertains directly to the controversial June 2006 examinations in the Philippines.

Asked if passing the NCLEX or the CGFNS exam by the successful examinees of the June 2006 licensure exam would make them eligible for VisaScreen certificates, CGFNS replies:

"No. The passage of the NCLEX or the CGFNS Examination is only one of four general VisaScreen requirements. Under normal circumstances, passage of either examination will fulfill this particular requirement. However, the license of those Philippine nurses who passed only the June 2006 exam has been determined to be "not comparable" to a US nursing license due to the fact that the licensing examination given by the PRC [Professional Regulation Commission] was compromised.

Therefore, the VisaScreen certificate cannot be issued, as required by US immigration law and its implementing regulations to those participating in only this compromised examination."

"Does the CGFNS decision have an effect on the validity of the Philippine nursing licensure?"

"No. The CGFNS decision to deny the VisaScreen to the June 2006 passers of the Philippine Nursing Licensure Examination relates only to US immigration law."

The CGFNS itself investigated the controversy surrounding the nursing board exam by sending a fact-finding mission to the Philippines last September.

It concluded that the "licensure process for those who received their license as a result of passing the compromised June 2006 licensure examination raises significant questions about the accurate assessment of the competencies of many of those individuals." *Inquirer Research and Nikko Dizon*

DOJ: No legal problem if nurses retake exam

From page A1

will order a retake in order to satisfy the requirements of the US market, I think there's nothing wrong with that. It only means we're taking cognizance of the US request," Gonzalez said.

He said the retake "has nothing to do with the Philippine policy on these nurses."

Gonzalez said the retake would be done to satisfy the requirement of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), a US-based independent organization that screens foreign nurse applicants in the United States.

A majority of US states require foreign nurses to obtain CGFNS-issued VisaScreen Certificates, a federally approved screening program for foreign healthcare workers seeking an occupational visa in the United States.

The CGFNS announced on its website Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) that the June 2006 passers would not be eligible for VisaScreen Certificates unless they took the equivalent of Tests 3 and 5 "on a future licensing examination administered by Philippine regulatory authorities" and obtained a passing score.

The CGFNS urged Philippine authorities to "provide an opportunity for a retake" for the passers "without surrender of licensure" for them to qualify for the VisaScreen Certificate.

The US-based group made the announcement a day after the Philippine Supreme Court rejected with finality, on a technicality, the plea of groups, including nursing professors led by those from the University of Sto. Tomas, to order a retake of the tainted portions of the board exam.

The nursing professors questioned before the high tribunal the Court of Appeals decision to order only a selective retake of the examination, paving the way for the oath-taking of the passers.

Some 17,800 of 42,006 examinees passed the June 2006 board exam.

The appellate court had ruled that those affected by the PRC's recomputation of grades, which the commission nullified, should retake Test 3 (medical-surgical nursing) and Test 5 (psychiatric nursing) whose questions had been leaked beforehand.

Not binding

Gonzalez said the Supreme Court's decision was not binding on the United States.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday directed Labor Secretary Arturo Brion to appeal for reconsideration of the CGFNS decision.

Brion said he was worried other countries might also require those who passed the June 2006 board exam to retake the questioned portions.

The CGFNS decision came less than a week after American officials approved the Philippine application to be a testing center for the National Council Licensure Examination.

The NCLEX exam, taken by some 9,000 Filipinos annually, is a key requirement for nurses to be able to work in the United States.

New nurses against retake

The Alliance of New Nurses (ANN), a group of passers of the June 2006 board exam, urged the government to stand pat on its decision not to hold a retake of the tainted tests and to continue to appeal the CGFNS requirement.

"There was nothing wrong with the decision of the Philippine government not to order a retake," ANN spokesperson Renato Aquino said.

He blamed Dante Ang of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas for the CGFNS decision. CGFNS representatives met only with Ang and with the PRC before the CGFNS announced its requirement, Aquino said.

Ang had been supportive of a retake of the tainted tests, but the PRC was against it. "He made a mess, and he should clean up the mess that he started," Aquino said.

Interference

He also said the CGFNS requirement amounted to interference in the country's internal affairs.

Aquino urged Philippine government agencies to work together to convince the CGFNS to scrap its retake requirement.

He said the CGFNS decision was another ordeal that the June 2006 exam passers would have to face.

He said the batch's oath-taking had been postponed for months, hindering its members from working as nurses.

While ANN is against a retake, the president of the Philippine Nursing Association (PNA) supports it.

"It's their (nurses) decision if they want to re-take. And they should be allowed because that's their human right," said the PNA president, Dr. Leah Paquiz.

Paquiz said the CGFNS decision came as a blow to the June 2006 board passers who want to pursue careers in the United States.

Biggest crisis

She described the leakage in last year's exam as the biggest crisis to hit the profession in the country since she became a nurse in 1974.

Paquiz said the PNA would be meeting with "all specialty groups and all nursing leaders" this afternoon to discuss what to do in light of the CGFNS decision.

"We don't want to divide the profession anymore. That's why we will be discussing this first before we issue an official statement," Paquiz said.

She said: "We will be making one stand. Our nursing profession has been tainted."

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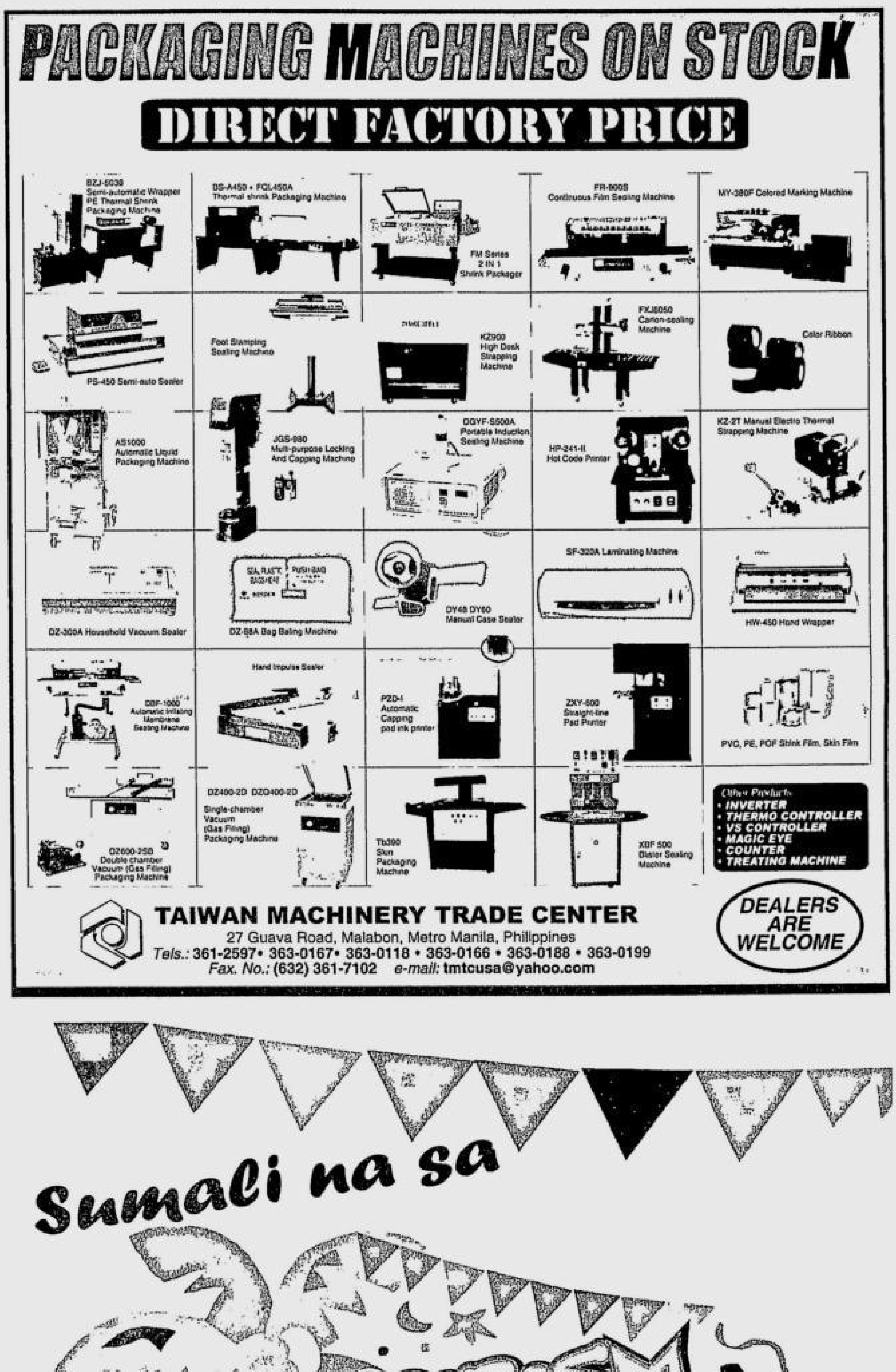

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RP tourism campaign rides Singapore streets

By Cynthia D. Balana

A 25-TAXI MOTORCADE ALONG Singapore's major thoroughfares and through its premier shopping district, Orchard Road, kicked off the "Wow Philippines" taxi ad campaign in the city-state recently.

In her report to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, Ambassador to Singapore Belen Anota said the launch of the motorcade coincided with the holding of the Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) 2007 and the Travex (Travel Exchange) at the ATF.

Anota rode in the motorcade joined by Philippine Department of Tourism officials led by Oscar Palabyab, undersecretary for tourism services and regional offices sector, and Eduardo Jarque Jr., undersecretary for tourism planning and promotions.

Also present at the launch were officers and staff members of the embassy and its attached agencies, and leaders and members of the local Filipino community decked out in Filipiniana.

Anota noted the event was covered by the Singapore and local Filipino press.

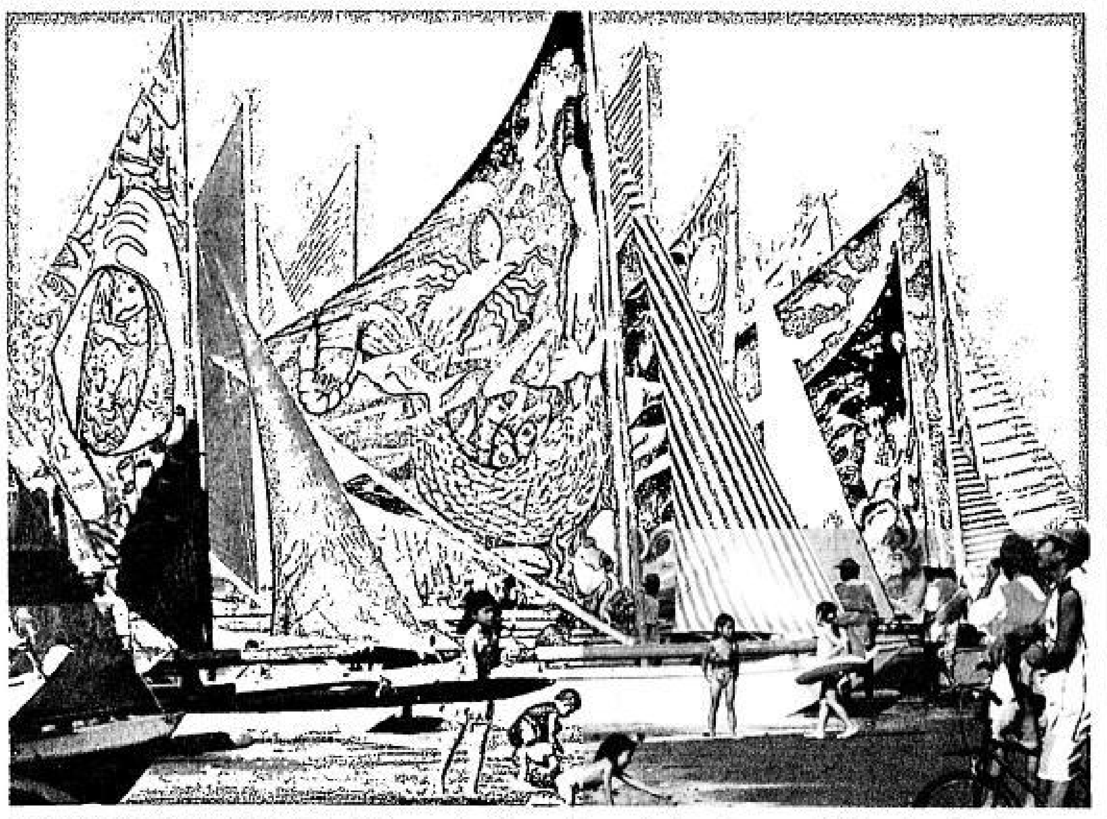
The motorcade ended at the Suntec Convention Center, where the Philippine booth was manned by sales representatives of hotels, resorts, travel agencies and airlines in the country, such as the Waterfront Hotels, Marco Polo Davao, Club Paradise Palawan, Philippine Airlines and Seair.

The Philippine booth exuded a resort feel, adorned with lush greenery and a *bahay kubo* (nipa hut).

Organized by the Philippine Tourism Office in Singapore under tourism attaché Gerosel Syquian, the taxi ad campaign will run for three months.

This follows the successful bus ad campaign that ran in the city-state from April to June 2006 and the Mass Rapid Transit train ad campaign promoting the Philippines that ended on Dec. 31, 2006.

From January to September 2006, records showed that Singaporean tourist arrivals in the Philippines registered a 16.8-percent increase compared to the same period the previous year, making Singapore one of the highest growth markets for Philippine tourism.



COLORS OF THE WIND. Colorful *paraw* (native outriggers) attract a crowd of local and foreign tourists to Iloilo for its annual Paraw Regatta which this year was celebrated together with the Chinese New Year. The paraw glide over the waters of the Iloilo Strait to Guimaras and back earning cash prizes for the winners.

ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Another world-first in mobile remittances from Smart

Leadership Summit
Barcelona, 12th February 2007
GSM

Smart President and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno

The mobile world's movers and shakers gathered at the 2007 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona. Among the key executives from Smart who attended are (from left) – Network Services Division Head Rolando G. Peña, Administration and Materials Management Division Head Ramoncito S. Fernandez and Wireless Consumer Division Group Head Danilo J. Mojica.

Smart Services Hub unveiled at the 3GSM World Congress

Speaking before an international audience of top mobile operators at the recently concluded 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona, SMART Communications, Inc. (SMART) president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno unveiled the Smart Services Hub, an innovative mobile commerce platform that will make it possible for Filipinos abroad to avail of a secure, affordable and convenient remittance service.

Using this platform, overseas mobile phone operators and banks who partner with Smart will be able to offer a service that allows Filipinos in their countries to send remittances to their loved ones wherever they are and whenever they want – with just a few clicks on their mobile phones.

"This innovation will give overseas Filipinos the power of choice as it addresses the three concerns of migrant workers with respect to remittances – cost, convenience and control," said Nazareno.

"For our partner banks and operators abroad, this will enable them to offer robust and secure mobile phone-based remittance services in a cost- and time-efficient manner to migrant populations in their countries," he added. "For Smart's partner banks in the Philippines, this offers a great opportunity to better serve OFWs and their families, including those not currently reached by the banking system."

Pilot projects are underway in the Middle East and Europe. In Bahrain, Smart is working with MTC Vodafone Bahrain and a leading regional bank in the Middle East. A similar arrangement is being set up with a mobile operator and a bank in Italy.

Realizing the need for a global hub that will be interoperable with the Smart Services Hub, Smart will also launch a pilot project with MasterCard as an authorization, clearing and settlement partner.

With over 10 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and migrants in nearly 200 countries and territories, the Philippines is now the third largest recipient of remittances next only to India and Mexico. In 2006 alone, Filipinos abroad remitted more than US$14 billion – about 10% of the country's gross domestic product.

Through Smart's m-commerce platform, mobile operators at countries hosting Filipino migrants and OFWs can provide menu-based services that enable their migrant subscribers to use their mobile phones to remit funds drawn from their accounts in a partner bank.

Barcelona
2007

An estimated 55,000 visitors from across the globe gathered at the 2007 3GSM World Congress to do business and discuss the hottest trends in the mobile phone industry.

The transaction goes through an authorization, clearing and settlement process that allows the funds to be deposited in an account in a partner bank in the Philippines or in a Smart Money electronic wallet linked to the mobile phone of the recipient here. Both the sender and recipient will be notified via a text message that the remittance transaction has been completed.

The Smart Services Hub makes it simpler and faster for banks and mobile operators to work together in providing remittance services. The net result here and abroad will be better service for OFWs and more funds being channeled through the banking system, thus benefiting the economies of both the sending and receiving countries.

Smart's initiatives are part of the global mobile money transfer (GMMT) program of the GSM Association, the international trade association representing more than 700 GSM mobile operators across 217 countries and territories worldwide. Supported by 19 of the world's leading mobile operators, this program aims to create a money transfer solution that will take advantage of the pervasiveness of mobile phone networks worldwide in order to lower the cost of remittances.

The announcement of the GMMT generated considerable interest in the 3GSM World Congress. In a press statement, GSMA President and CEO Rob Conway said: "The creation of a global hub will enable the mobile networks, which now cover more than 80% of the world's population, to offer the world's burgeoning migrant population a convenient way to securely and cost-effectively transfer money to their families back in their home countries." He added that this could raise the amount of remittances worldwide from about $250 billion to as high as one trillion dollars.

The Smart Services Hub is the latest addition to Smart's list of world-first wireless applications. Since 2000, Smart has been actively pioneering mobile commerce in the Philippines. These services include *Smart Money*, the world's first electronic wallet card linked to a mobile phone which won the 2001 GSMA Award for "Most Innovative GSM Wireless Service for Customers." It was also cited as the "Best Product Innovation" at the MasterCard Marketing Awards in Australia.

In 2004, *Smart Load*, its micro prepaid over-the-air loading service was cited by the GSMA as the "Best Mobile Application or Service for the Consumer Market." A year after, Smart launched the world's first mobile phone-based remittance service called *Smart Padala* for Filipino migrant workers.

DAHIL SMART TAYO

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Tire factory shut down for pollution

By DJ Yap

A RUBBER TIRE FACTORY THAT was emitting smoke and a foul odor in a barangay in Quezon City has been shut down by the city government for failing to meet health and environmental standards.

Adanac Development Corp., which is located at 82 Howmart Road, Baesa, Novaliches, was ordered closed last week after inspectors said it posed a health hazard to residents in the area.

Complaints against the company, formerly known as Daytona Rubber Corp., reached concerned agencies last year, prompting city officials to launch an investigation.

In a statement, Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. said such businesses should be located in industrial areas, far from residential communities to protect residents from possible health risks.

Inspections conducted by two local government agencies—the Business Permits and Licensing Office and the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department—confirmed that the factory was the cause of air pollution in the area due to its emission of toxic fumes and a foul smell, officials said.

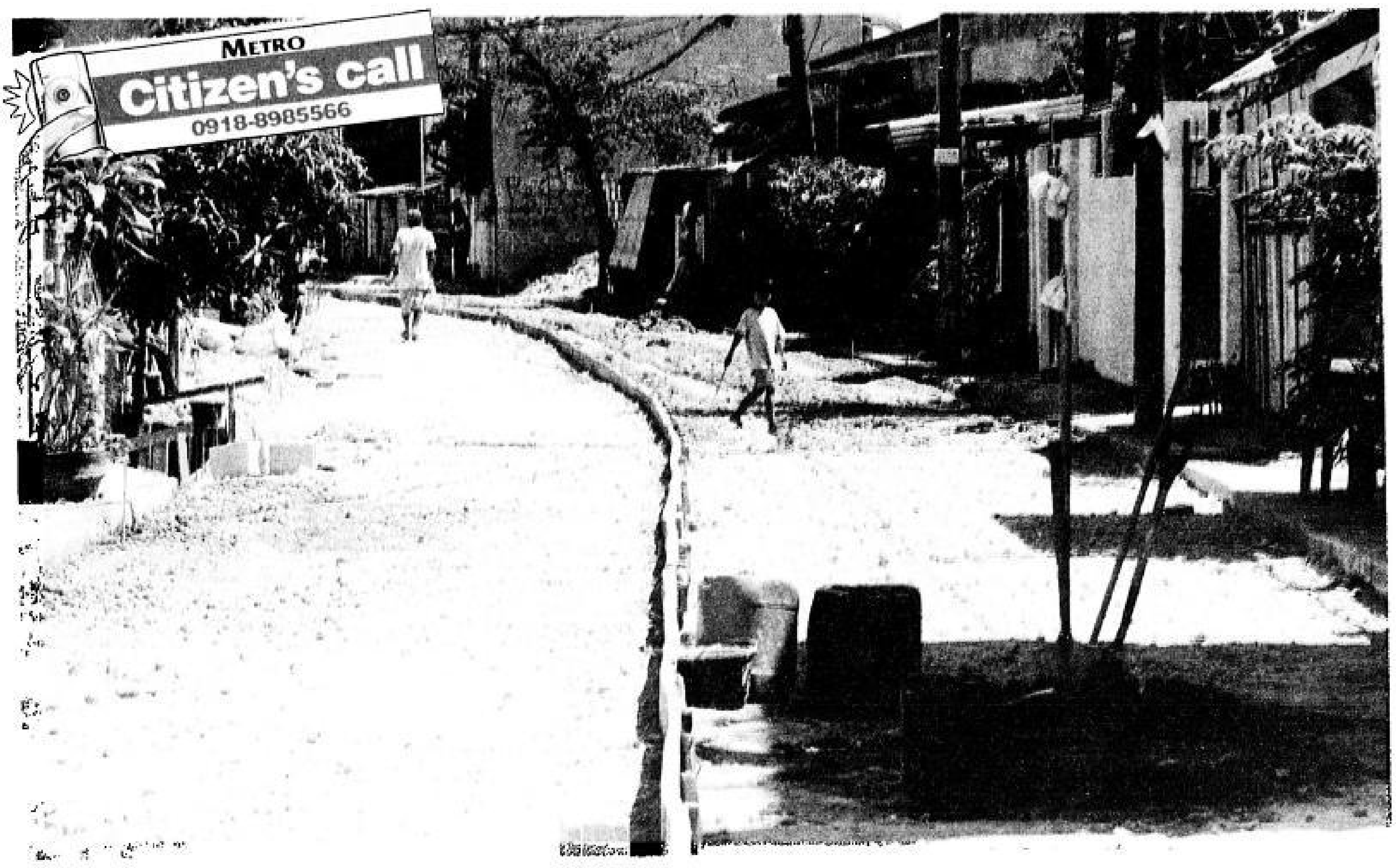
On Oct. 9, 2006, the BPLO issued a cease and desist order against the firm.

But the company president, Cesar Cua, appealed the decision and requested the EPWMD to allow them to operate for 18 hours. Cua added that they had installed equipment meant to contain the fumes.

The agencies granted the request but officials later discovered that the company was operating 24 hours a day in violation of the terms of the agreement since the CDO was still in effect.

City officials also found out that the firm's permit to operate issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had expired last December.

Another tire plant in Cavite operated by the same company was also ordered shut for failing to comply with environmental standards, officials said.



PROMPT RESPONSE
Following a text message sent by Aris Borja of Barangay Sta. Ana, Taguig City, about the sorry state of DMC Street Extension, Mayor Freddie Tinga sent a letter to Metro Citizen's Call. Tinga's letter read: "Please be informed that the street is now being rehabilitated permanently by the contractor of the Department of Public Works and Highways. Work started last Feb. 1, 2007 and should be completed in the next six months." RYAN LIM

METRO Citizen's call 0918-8985566

AUTHORITIES should do something about the passenger flow at the Cubao station of the Metro Rail Transit 3 especially during peak hours. I suggest that they install barriers similar to the ones at the Enchanted Kingdom theme park in Sta. Rosa, Laguna which help control passenger traffic and instill discipline among commuters.
—JANET, 38, Cubao, Quezon City

It was my first time to go to the Land Transportation Office branch in Cainta, Rizal for my license renewal. The place is so disorganized. Window 10, where the licenses are released, gave the slowest service because the staff assigned to man the window seemed indifferent to the crowd. Some of the people in the line had been waiting for almost three hours for their turn. I came at 8 a.m. and got my license at 3 p.m. Does it take one whole day for a license to be renewed?
—BIATCH, 34, Cainta

Can the Quezon City government and/or the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority check C3 Road near A. Bonifacio as well as Banawe and D. Tuazon Streets in Quezon City? These are all national roads but are full of diggings and potholes. Who's going to pay for the repair of our car's underchassis that is damaged every time we use these roads?
—OBET YOUNG, 45, M. Natividad Street, Manila

Jeepneys on New Panaderos Extension (near Lambingan Bridge), Mandaluyong City, have turned the street near Puregold Supermarket into a terminal, giving motorists a headache. The jeepneys load and unload passengers in the middle of the street. Traffic enforcers apparently do not think this is a problem because they don't do anything about it. Who is responsible for this mess?
—PAOLO MENDOZA, 25, San Juan,

What do you do with a *kagawad* who, despite an earlier complaint filed in the Liga ng mga Barangay, continues to flood our homes with toxic smoke each time his household cooks food using wood, not electricity or gas, even if they own LPG-run stoves and air-conditioning?
—PEPE SANCHEZ, 49, Don Manuel, Quezon City

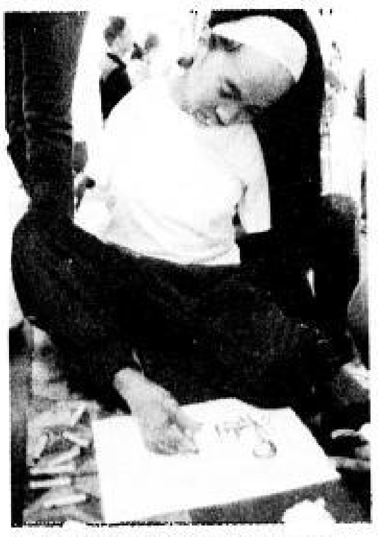
A special day for special kids at Camp Pag-ibig

By Miko L. Morelos

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS screamed, laughed and ran around as their parents watched from the sidelines.

Though some of them were unable to express their joy or excitement in words, it was evident by their expressions and actions that they were having the time of their lives.

Special children from all over Metro Manila and neighboring provinces gathered yesterday for the annual Camp Pag-ibig which was held at the Balara filter plant in Diliman, Quezon City.



ANGIE, a special teenager, is a skilled artist despite her disability. ROGER CARPIO

The event, now on its 31st year, provides cheer and hope to differently-abled youngsters by giving them a fun-filled day with activities such as singing, dancing, games and art work.

And have fun they did.

Participants, who spent Saturday night in tents at the camp site, woke up yesterday morning, eager to tackle the activities organizers had set up.

After attending Mass and the opening ceremonies, some children showed their skill in art, using crayons, paint and dried leaves to create pictures. Others took part in games while some were content to wade in a pool and talk to their new friends.

Their parents, meanwhile, attended a forum where they were encouraged to talk about their experiences in caring for their special child.

Co-camp director Teresa Mariano told the INQUIRER that most people are unaware how to deal with autistic children. The camp, she said, gives children an opportunity to be normal and socialize with others who are in the same situation.

"Given the opportunity, they can be integrated into the mainstream if the people around them are aware of the programs offered by public and private groups to help children with special needs," she said.

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5. Once documents are received, free item will be delivered via courier service. Only completed documents will be entertained.
6. Promo period is from Jan. 20, 2007 up to Mar. 30, 2007.
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No patients in this room, only diners

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

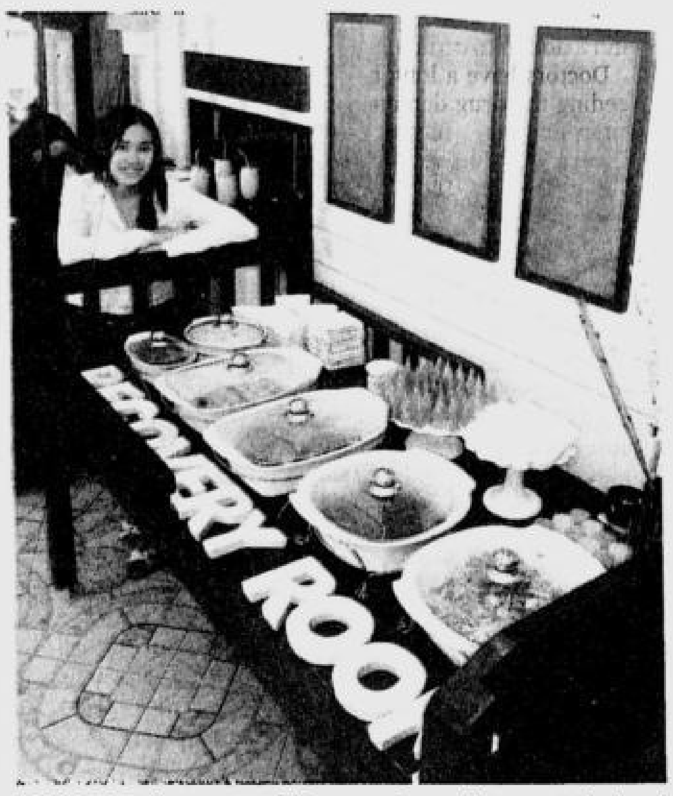
THE PLACE DISPLAYS SIGNS such as "Operating Room," "Nurse Station" and "Laboratory."

It has wheelchairs, beakers, clipboards and kidney-shaped trays made of stainless steel—things usually found in a medical facility. There's a plastic bottle hanging from an intravenous (IV) pole, too.

But this is one "recovery room" where patients, who just had an operation, are not wheeled in before they are brought to their regular rooms.

Recovery Room is a new restaurant that sits beside two hospitals—Asian Hospital and Medical Center and the Ospital ng Muntinlupa—at the bustling Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang.

Located on the ground floor of the new Civic Place building, Recovery Room is perhaps the only one of its kind in the Philippines.


IAN ACAS, the owner of "Recovery Room," poses at the head of a wooden bed which serves as a table. PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

Waiters and waitresses in scrub suits take the orders of customers who have two seating options: A wooden chair with the backrest wrapped in yellow or beige suede fashioned like a ribbon, or a wheelchair.

The "Operating Room" signage refers to the kitchen, "Nurse Station" to the cashier, and "Emergency Room" to the toilet.

Owner Ian Acas said Banaue craftsmen carved the wooden signs and built the tables and three beds, one of which has a huge light brown teddy bear sporting a stethoscope.

The medical equipment was purchased from Bambang Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila, where medical supplies are bought either on a wholesale or retail basis. Acas had the seats and backrests of the wheelchairs covered with suede by Shell Canvas.

With its cheery wallpaper design and air-conditioning, the restaurant gives customers the impression that it is a chic patisserie or a fine dining restaurant, says Acas, who was named by her father after the British novelist who created the James Bond series.

The concept has so impressed foreigners (Americans and a Japanese) and a Filipino (a physician from Asian Hospital) that they expressed interest in opening branches of Recovery Room.

Acas said two Americans, who had breakfast at the restaurant, found her place "really different" although they told her about "Nick's Recovery Room," a bar, in the United States.

The restaurateur, however, politely turned down propositions to open branches. "It's too early to open the business to a franchise. We have to fix the menu first," said Acas, a holder of a Psychology degree from the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

Specialty

The 67-square meter restaurant, which opened on Nov. 27, 2006, specializes in Kapampangan food such as "*derang-derang*" or grilled baby back ribs, chicken and *lapu-lapu*. dishes. It also offers "*babasuk*"—Kapampangan sizzling *sisig*—and three types of *relleno* (chicken *galantina*, prawn *thermidore* and *bangus*).

"Recovery Room serves delicious comfort food—anything that gives us pleasure," Acas said. "Others may list chocolate as No. 1 on their list, but for me, comfort food is Kapampangan cuisine."

Acas' preference for food from a province in Central Luzon stems from her upbringing. Her mother, a Minalin (Pampanga) native, is fond of preparing Kapampangan food.

The restaurant's cook, Beth Garcia, is, of course, a Kapampangan. "I wouldn't open the restaurant without her around," said Acas.

She adds that the business is practically a one-woman show. "I'm the driver, waitress and total entertainer. I help in the cooking. I also buy the supplies at Farmers Market, Makro and Alabang market. These are chores I have to do myself," she added.

Affordable, delicious

Since Recovery Room opened more than two months ago, she has found that customers do not go for slow-cooked meals.

Eighty percent of her regulars are nurses, nursing students, doctors and employees of Asian Hospital and Ospital ng Muntinlupa, and medical representatives.

"Today, we are slowing pushing our a la carte (with its premium price) because customers, even doctors, are trying to save money," says Acas. "Then, of course, they can't wait for long."

Her slow-roasted and tequila-marinated beef, for instance, takes four hours to prepare. "The market likes quick, affordable but delicious meals," Acas adds.

In response, she has come up with budget meals she calls "daily doses." A daily dose consists of two dishes, a cup of rice and a drink—for only P85.

For Monday, the menu consists of chicken BBQ, *inihaw na liempo*, fresh *lumpia* and *sinigang na hipon*. On Tuesdays, customers can choose from *lechon paksiw, bulalo, tortang talong* and *inihaw na bangus* with ensalada.

On Wednesday, there's roasted chicken with lemon grass, beef *pochero*, vegetable tempura, and shrimp *gambas*. Beef camto soup, pork BBQ, *kare-kareng* gulay, and crabs with sweet chili sauce are served on Thursday.

For Friday, there's beef *tapa*, chicken *inasal, pinakbet* and *isda sa miso*. There's beef with oyster sauce, *sinigang* (pork ribs), *binagoongang talong* and fish fillet with sweet and sour sauce on Saturday.

The dishes are laid out on a wooden bed with wheels and a plastic bottle hanging from the IV pole.

Recovery Room also caters to outpatients, patients fed up with hospital fare and people who take care of relatives confined in the hospitals. "Because of huge hospital bills, even the rich look for affordable but delicious food," Acas says.

Special dietary requirements

Patients who order food usually have special dietary requirements. Their orders include salt-free dishes, fresh *lumpia* without *patis* (fish sauce) and MSG, and egg omelette which does not include the yolk. Acas says her restaurant does not use MSG.

Food deliveries are also available to employees and patients at the nearby hospitals.

Open from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. six days a week except for Sunday, Recovery Room serves breakfast, lunch, *merienda* and dinner.

The concept of Recovery Room is something new that makes some outpatients and their families hesitant to go inside, according to Acas. They think it is part of Asian Hospital and is for convalescing patients only.

"So I ask them to go inside," she says. "I explain the medical theme because sometimes, they don't get it."

Besides giving customers good food, Acas says she listens to them, and helping some unburden themselves. "I sit with them and they tell me their worries."

The work is cut out for this 1995 Psychology graduate turned entrepreneur. "I love entertaining and pleasing people. It gives me a certain kind of satisfaction when people like what I serve."

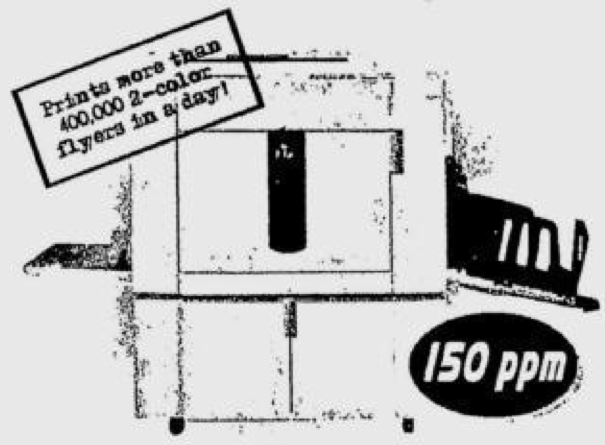
CUSTOMERS can sit on an ordinary wooden chair or, if they want, a wheelchair.

DID YOU KNOW

BINONDO came from the word "binundok," which was used to describe the formerly hilly area north of the Pasig River. Because of its strategic location, Binondo became a trading post for its residents, Chinese and Arabs, even before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines. It is now known as a hub of Chinese merchants.

In the 16th century, the Binondo Church was built. This was where San Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino saint, served as a sacristan. The late Pope John Paul II elevated the church in 1992 to the rank of Minor Basilica of San Lorenzo Ruiz.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research



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BALLROOM, MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL, MAKATI CITY

Session 1: How To Use Blue Ocean Strategy To Develop and Launch New Products That Will Make Competition Play Catch Up
Josiah Go, Chairman, Mansmith and Fielders, Inc.

Session 2: How To Strategize Thru A Brand Portfolio of Products
Dondi Gomez, Category Director for Skin and Deodorants and Head of Marketing Training, Unilever Philippines

Session 3: How To Formulate Your Brand DNA for Success
Weena Pineda, VP-Corporate Marketing, Splash Holdings

Session 4: How To Benefit From In-Store Consumer Behavior
Benedicto Cid, Managing Director, AC Nielsen Philippines

Session 5: How Suppliers Can Maximize Retail Investment
Wilson Lim, President, Abenson, Waltermart & ElectroWorld Group and Joanne Lim, Managing Director, Waltermart Supermarket

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Doctor who fed Smith's drug demands sought

LOS ANGELES—IF A PRESCRIPTION needs to be filled in Hollywood, chances are celebrities can find a doctor to do it.

Doctors have a long history of feeding the drug demands of the entertainment industry from Marilyn Monroe to Winona Ryder, Elvis Presley to Courtney Love.

Now, California authorities are looking at a physician who reportedly prescribed methadone to Anna Nicole Smith under a fake name. The former Playboy Playmate died Feb. 8 after collapsing at a Florida hotel. The cause is under investigation.

This past week, California's medical board opened an inquiry as investigators tried to determine if there was any misconduct by Dr. Sandeep Kapoor, who reportedly prescribed methadone to Smith. The celebrity news web site TMZ.com said "Michelle Chase" was an alias used by Smith in a pharmacy receipt for a methadone prescription.

Methadone is a popular narcotic painkiller that is used as part of drug addiction detoxification and maintenance programs. Methadone overdoses can cause shallow breathing and dangerous changes in heart beat.

An attorney for Kapoor, a 1996 graduate of Boston University School of Medicine, said in a statement Friday that his treatment of Smith was "sound and appropriate" and he will cooperate with the state's medical board.

The allure of having a star as a patient can sometimes influence whether doctors follow the rules or break the law, one veteran Hollywood publicist says.

"It's not easy to say no to a celebrity," said Michael Levine. "History has taught us whether it's Anna Nicole, Elvis or John Belushi, they can get what they want. It's like water."

Levine said celebrities turn off their "psychological smoke alarms" and surround themselves with people willing to cater to their needs and who aren't willing to intervene when problems arise.

"We hopefully have friends and family who will step in and help us out when there are problems," Levine said. "But people who don't have the smoke alarms will be enveloped by fire at some point."

Monroe died at 36 from an overdose of sleeping pills in August 1962. She had been under a doctor's care at the time, police said.

Presley, who died in 1977 at 42, was known to travel with George Nichopoulos, a former physician who overprescribed drugs to clients, who also included rockabilly singer Jerry Lee Lewis.

Members of the medical team who performed Presley's autopsy acknowledged in 1990 that the singer was addicted to prescription medications and his death may have been hastened by "polypharmacy," a reaction to mixing many drugs. Nichopoulos lost his medical license but was acquitted of related criminal charges.

"Top Gun" producer Don Simpson was found dead of a drug overdose in January 1996. Traces of 21 drugs were found in his blood, and at least two doctors were investigated for overprescribing medications for Simpson.

More recently, celebrities have used fake names to get their vials filled. A 2002 probation report stemming from the shoplifting arrest of actress Winona Ryder showed that she used a half-dozen aliases when she sought prescription drugs. The report said Ryder went "doctor shopping" and had 37 prescriptions filled by 20 doctors over a three-year span.

"It's not uncommon for a high-profile person to get a prescription filled under an alias," said Ryder's attorney, Mark Geragos, citing a celebrity's need for privacy. "It happens with great frequency."

The California Health and Safety Code includes several sections stating that no person who prescribes or dispenses a controlled substance may give a phony name or address or make any false statements on the prescription form. Geragos said the onus is on the doctor.

In Ryder's case, Jules Lusman pleaded no-contest to practicing medicine without a license and grand theft, and was sentenced to five years probation. *AP*

THAI actress Chotiros Suriyawong in her revealing black dress in picture taken on Feb. 12. REUTERS

Thais outraged by star's black skimpy number

BANGKOK—A REVEALING DRESS WORN BY a minor actress has sparked a moral furor in Thailand, prompting a university to order the aspiring star to read to the blind in penance for her lapse in judgement.

Recalling a scandal sparked by British actress Elizabeth Hurley's safety-pin dress worn to a 1994 film premier, Chotiros "Amy" Suriyawong stepped out in a very little black number to Thailand's equivalent of the Oscars last week.

But the kingdom, currently experiencing something of a moral crusade, was not impressed with the frock, which featured a three-inch slit from the cleavage down to the thigh, held together by a few sparkly strips of cloth.

The dress, and her apparent lack of undergarments, caused a public outcry, with the Thai press berating the 22-year-old for offending Thai culture with the barely-there outfit, and web chat boards discussing little else.

Since the dress made its debut at the awards ceremony on Feb. 9, there have been tears, apologies and retribution in Thailand, which is increasingly seeking to balance its traditional Buddhist values with the country's raunchier side, which attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists a year.

"I feel really guilty and sad, I would like to apologize to Thai people," said Chotiros, who has had a handful of small film roles.and is currently studying at Thammasat University's faculty of liberal arts.

"It seems like my entertainment career is over," she said between sobs at a press conference at the end of the week, during which she demurely buttoned up in a red cardigan and plain white shirt.

Her Bangkok-based university on Thursday decided to take appropriate action against its rebellious student.

"We gave her a warning and asked her to do 15 days of community service, reading books and recording it for blind people," the Thai-language Daily News quoted the university's deputy president, Parinya Thaewanarumittkul, as saying.

But the film industry was not so lenient. Thailand's biggest production company, Sahamongkol Film, said it would cut her small part in their upcoming movie "Beautiful Samurai."

"We are not a porn company, I don't like the actress to show her body, it is not a good image," Khao Sod newspaper reported Somsak Techaratanaprasert, the company's president, as saying.

"We are Thai, we are a Thai production company, we have to preserve Thai culture," he added. *AFP*

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Zamboanga City Water District, through its Bids and Awards Committee I (BAC I), invites suppliers/manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project.

LOT NO.	PR. NO.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)	COST OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF ISSUANCE OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF PRE-BID CONFERENCE	DATE OF SUBMISSION/ OPENING OF BIDS
1	9272	Reconditioned Water Tanker, 6 wheeler, with 10,000 liters capacity stainless steel tank complete with a water pump, fittings & accessories ISUZU engine powered truck with new tires, spare tire, jack, tire wrench Unit must be registered with the LTO in the name of ZCWD and covered with a comprehensive insurance from the GSIS Truck color Tahiti Blue	P 1,450,000.00	1,000.00	February 19 to 21, 2007	February 22, 2007	March 1, 2007

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process of the Eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT and inspect the Bidding documents at the address given below during office hours (8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.)

All Bids must be accompanied by a ***Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's and Manager's Check in the amount of One Percent (1%) of the Approved Budget Cost.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid Opening shall be at the 2nd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building, Pilar St., Zamboanga City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representative's who choose to attend at the address below.

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time or prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Mr. Noel M. Kawaguchi, Pilar St., Zamboanga City 7000
Telephone No. (062) 991-1556; Fax: (062) 991-2799

(Sgd.) ARNULFO A. ALFONSO
BAC I-Chairman

(PDI – February 19, 2006)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Department of Education
BENGUET DIVISION
Division Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **Department of Education – Benguet Division Office,** Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites suppliers / manufacturers / distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	:	Supply and Delivery of School Furniture
Location	:	Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet
Brief Description	:	**Package A** – Elementary Table with chair with teacher's table and chair (all wood) **Sub-total – P 978,500.00** **Package B** – Elementary and Secondary Armchair with Teacher's Table and Chair (all wood) Sub-total – **P 764,860.00**
Approved Budget For the Coantract (Grand Total)	:	**P 3,496,960.00**
Funding source	:	Government of the Philippines (GOP), 2006 General Appropriations Act (GAA) (75% Allotment)
Contract duration	:	120 Days
Delivery sites	:	"Door to door" delivery to various recipient schools (See attached Requirements of the Bidding Documents)

Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184 known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stocks belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified under Republic Act 5183. Only bids from bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II, Instruction to Bidders of the Bidding Documents.

The DepEd-Benguet Division Office will hold a Pre-bid Conference open to all prospective bidders on March 5, 2007, 10:00 AM at the Benguet Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet.

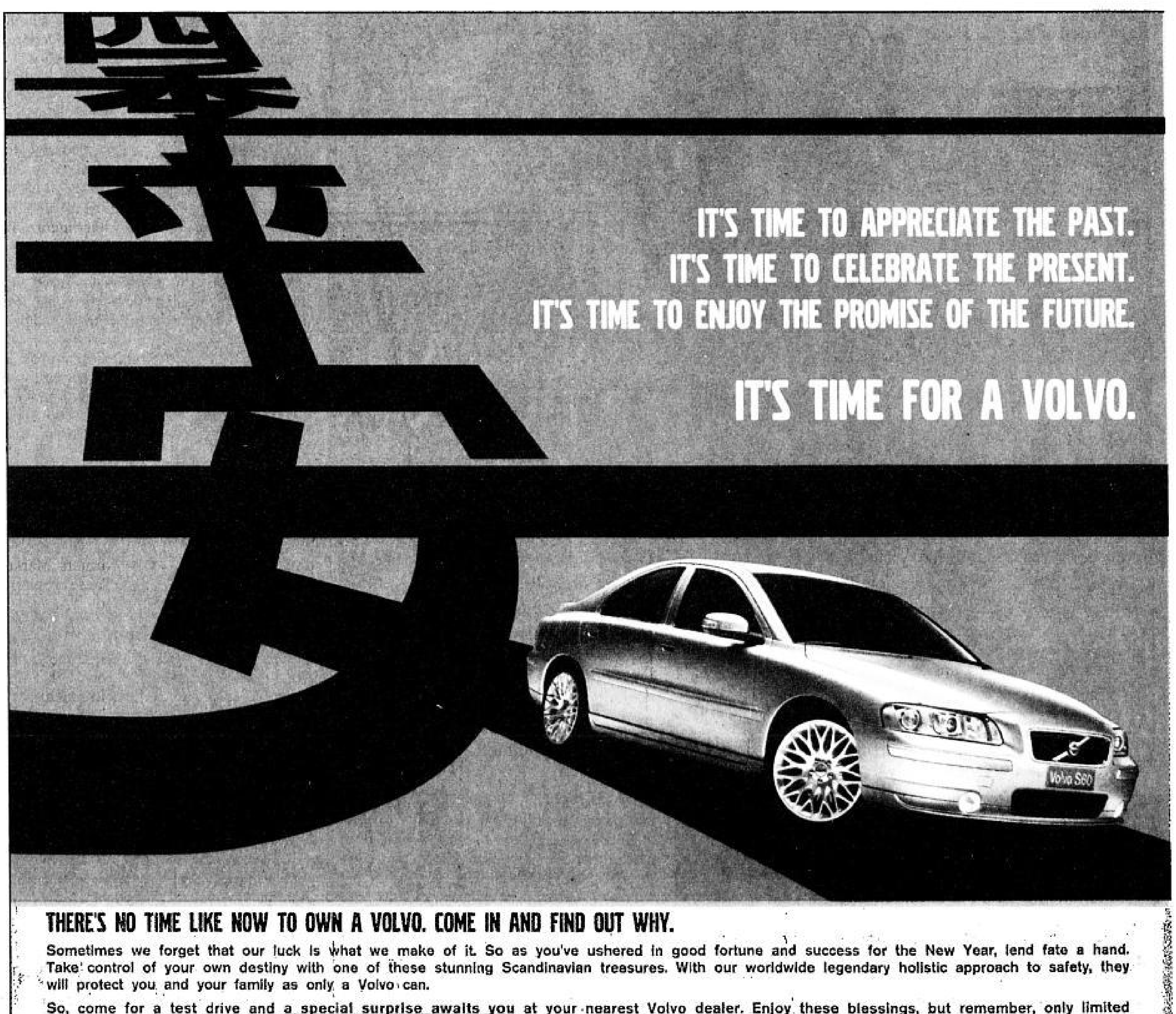
Bids must be received on or before March 19, 2007, 10:00 AM at the Benguet Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids in excess of the Approved Budget for the Contract shall be rejected.

Bid documents shall be available to prospective bidders upon payment of the non-refundable amount of Three Thousand Pesos Only (P 3,000.00) to the Division Office's Cashier.

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders. Further, the BAC reserves the right to waive any formality in the responses to the eligibility requirements and to this invitation.

(Sgd.) **NANCY G. LUMBAS**
Chairperson
Benguet Division Office,
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – February 19, 2007)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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Bush dodges 2nd damaging censure

WASHINGTON—US SENATE DEMOCRATS, thwarted in their bid to force a debate on President George W. Bush's planned US troop buildup in Iraq, were expected on Sunday (Monday in Manila) to step up their pressure on the administration in order to force it to change its strategy in the war.

"The Republican leadership can run from this debate but as I've said before, they can't hide. The Senate will keep fighting to force President Bush to change course in Iraq," said Majority Leader Harry Reid at a news conference Saturday, minutes after Democrats failed to break a Senate deadlock blocking debate on Bush's unpopular Iraq strategy.

Reid and other leading senators from both sides on the aisle were to hit the television talk show circuit Sunday to explain their positions in the standoff—and their plans for the future.

Sixty votes were needed in the 100-seat Senate to move to a vote on a resolution condemning the administration's plan to send 21,500 additional US combat troops to Iraq.

But only a total of 56 senators, including seven Republicans, voted to allow debate to start, four votes short of the minimum. Thirty-four senators voted against.

With the symbolic votes over in both chambers, the White House issued a statement calling for broad congressional support in upcoming spending bills for Iraq.

"This week's voting gave the world a glimpse of democracy's vigor. The next votes should provide unmistakable assurance of this nation's resolve in achieving success, supporting the cause of democracy, and stopping terrorist forces in their ultimate aim of bringing their violence to our shores," the White House statement read.

Reid vowed that Democrats would keep up the pressure, despite Saturday's setback.

"The Senate is not done with this issue. It's too important to be brushed aside," he said.

"The administration's failure has put us in a deep hole. It's time to start climbing out of that hole rather than digging it deeper," he said.

Fellow Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer was even more pointed in his criticism.

"Just like in the days of Vietnam, the pressure will mount, the president will find he has no strategy, he will have to change his strategy, and the vast majority of troops will be taken out of harm's way and come home," he said on the floor of the Senate, referring to the Vietnam War debacle.

Democratic 2008 presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Joe Biden and Chris Dodd voted in favor of holding the debate.

For their part, Republicans crowed at having blocked Democrats for the second time in less than two weeks from holding a vote condemning Bush's plan to boost US troop strength. *AFP*

Rio carnival no sex party, Brazilians say

A REVELLER of Unidos do Peruche samba school during carnival celebrations in Sao Paulo, Feb. 18. AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL—The very idea that American soldiers on leave from Iraq would see Rio's carnival as a sex party has Brazilians outraged.

A report in Britain's The Guardian newspaper that US soldiers are looking to Rio for rest and recreation—especially sex tourism—prompted many Brazilians to say that the foreigners have it all wrong.

Despite all the jiggling, sweating flesh on display Saturday as crowds of dancers pressed together in the first full day of carnival celebrations, Brazilians say the spectacle is not all about sex. They see it as a celebration of the body, closer in the spirit to the Olympics than the strip bar.

While US soldiers could hardly be seen in the crowds, Brazilians complain about those who come mainly for sex tourism, and opportunities seemed to abound along Copacabana beach.

"If they came here from Iraq they wouldn't go back!" said Brian Simon, 43, an ex-Marine from New Jersey who was surrounded by barely dressed women as he drank at an outdoor bar.

Brazilians say nakedness at carnival is about sensuality. Yes, sexual imagery abounds in the samba schools, and thousands of revelers dance skin-to-skin on the sidelines. But nudity carries a different connotation in Brazil than in many other countries.

"Here, nakedness doesn't only lead to sexuality, it leads you to aesthetic appreciation. A woman is dancing but it's not pornographic. It's a collective experience of reconsidering bodies, like at the Olympic games," said Roberto Da Matta, a retired University of Notre Dame sociology professor and author of Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes. *AP*

Bioengineering helps mice recover teeth

PARIS—IN A WORLD FIRST, Japanese researchers reported Sunday they had successfully replaced natural teeth in mice with teeth that were created in a lab dish from single cells.

Writing in the journal Nature Methods, a team led by Takashi Tsuji of the Tokyo University of Science describe how they took two kinds of cell—mesenchymal and epithelial cells—that develop into a tooth.

They first grew each cell type separately to make larger numbers of them and then injected them into a sticky protein called collagen.

The tooth germ grew into a tiny tooth about 1.3mm long. The researchers then extracted the incisor from an 8-week-old adult mouse and inserted the bioengineered tooth.

After two weeks, the transplant was found to be growing perfectly, with root, enamel, dental pulp, bone, blood vessel—the same composition and structure as a normal tooth.

The study "provides the first evidence of successful reconstitution of an entire organ via the transplantion of bioengineered material," the authors say.

AFP

Papon, war criminal; 96

PAPON in a 1991 photo. AP

PARIS—FRENCH WAR CRIMINAL Maurice Papon died on Saturday aged 96, four years after being released from a jail term for his role in the World War II deportation of French Jews to Nazi death camps.

A senior official under the wartime Vichy government, Papon was sentenced to 10 years in jail in 1998 for his role in organizing the deportation of hundreds of Jews to Nazi Germany, where most of them died in extermination camps.

If Papon "was able to die peacefully, it was not the case for those he sent to their deaths," Benjamin Abtan, the president of the Union of Jewish students in France told AFP in reaction to the death.

"The Papon trial was a key moment in the construction of memory of the Holocaust in France," he said.

"We will aways remember him as a criminal, but also as a symbol of the responsibility of the French state in the attempt to destroy Europe's Jews," he said.

Marie-George Buffet, the French Communist party's candidate for French president, said "Maurice Papon's death does not turn the page on his crimes".

And Michel Slitinsky, a spokesperson for Papon's victims, said he regretted that Papon only served three years behind bars.

"He paid. Unfortunately he only stayed three years in prison, in a gilted prison."

Papon was released from jail in 2002 on medical grounds. He suffered from heart and kidney ailments, and has been living at his family home at Gretz-Armainvilliers, 20 miles (32 km) east of Paris. *AFP*

Lunar New Year starts with a loud bang in China

BEIJING—LUNAR NEW YEAR started with a bang Sunday as China's 1.3 billion population ushered in the Year of the Pig with food, drink and massive firework displays.

Huge explosions rocked Beijing overnight as residents set off a record number of firecrackers to scare away angry ghosts and welcome good fortune for the New Year.

Hospitals are expecting a baby boom in the year of the pig, considered one of the most auspicious in the Chinese zodiac.

For Chinese people looking forward to a week off work, New Year's Eve on Saturday focused on family gatherings, temple visits and extravagant firework displays which continued into New Year's day.

The previous week saw what has been described as the world's biggest human migration, as hundreds of millions of Chinese jostled in trains, planes, buses and boats to make it home for the festivities.

Excluded from the celebrations, however, were workers building venues for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, who were ordered to work through the holiday week, media reports said.

For most other Chinese celebrations began Saturday with isolated fireworks cracking throughout the day, building into a massive climax of sound and light from neighborhoods across the city that kept the 15 million population awake into the early hours.

The Chinese, who invented gunpowder, traditionally set off fireworks to scare away evil spirits that bring bad luck.

Two years ago, the Chinese capital lifted a 12-year ban on firecrackers that had been imposed for safety reasons.

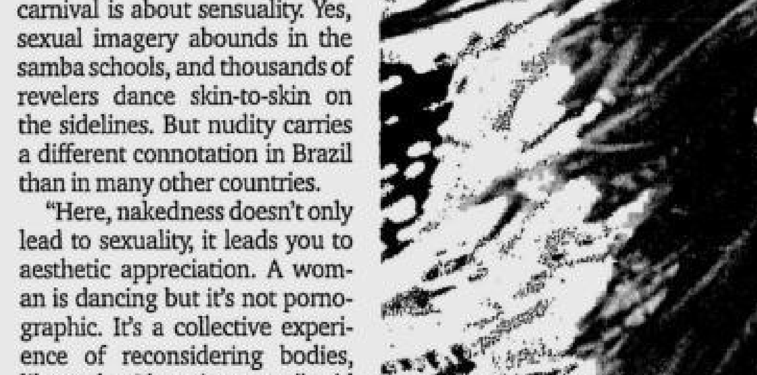
The vice director of Beijing's Public Security Bureau said more fireworks were set off than last year.

"This year more fireworks were sold and they were set off for longer than last year," Yu Hongyuan told state media.

All police leave was cancelled as the city government mounted a tight security operation involving more than 400,000 officials, according to reports, including fire departments, neighborhood watch teams and internal security personnel.

Even so, media reports said more than 100 fires were reported across the city and 125 people were injured, three seriously, including one person who lost both eyes. Last year, 16 people died in China during New Year celebrations. *AFP*

Paraglider survives 3-hour, high-altitude storm ride



GERMAN champion paraglider Ewa Wisnierska recounting ordeal. AP

SYDNEY—EWA WISNIERSKA may be the luckiest woman alive.

The 35-year-old German cheated death when she was accidentally sucked up to the cruising altitude of jumbo jets during a training run in her paraglider, floated unconscious in freezing conditions for about an hour, and managed to land safely.

But Wisnierska, the top-ranked woman paraglider pilot in the world, is undaunted by her experience and is itching to fly again.

Wisnierska's extraordinary ordeal has been likened to climbing Mount Everest in 15 minutes. In fact, the highest altitude reading on her instruments was 9,946 meters—some 1,000 meters higher than the world's tallest peak.

Experts have marveled that she also survived being battered by chunks of ice in the frozen, oxygen-depleted atmosphere before landing 60 km from where she took off three and a half hours earlier.

Wisnierska's adventure began as a routine training run at about 1 p.m. on Wednesday. Conditions at the time were near perfect, although other pilots were aware of a nearby storm.

But 90 minutes into her flight, she saw trouble. A massive doubled-headed summer stormfront loomed and although she attempted to steer away from it, she was sucked in and upwards at a dizzying pace.

"I could hear lightning in front of me, behind me, around me," she told reporters afterwards. "It was dark, everything was frozen and I know I cannot do anything, just hope and pray I will come out somewhere, hopefully alive."

Wisnierska was able to radio her team to tell them she had been blown into the storm. But shortly afterwards, she blacked out as she was catapulted upwards at a rate of almost 400 meters a minute.

When she awoke, she was drifting at 6,900 meters and her body and paraglider were covered in ice.

When she landed she was covered in ice, her body blackened by frostbite. *AFP*

US Marine gets 8 years for Iraq slay

CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA—A US military judge on Saturday sentenced a US Marine to eight years in prison after he pleaded guilty to murdering an Iraqi in the city of Hamdania last year, military officials said.

Lance Corporal Robert Pennington, 22, pleaded guilty on Tuesday to being an accessory to the murder, in which a total of eight members of the US military have faced various charges.

Pennington, who had initially faced the death penalty, became the fifth US serviceman to admit involvement in the death of Hashim Ibrahim Awad in Hamdania outside Baghdad on April 26, 2006.

Prosecutors say seven Marines and a Navy medic kidnapped Awad from his home and killed him before staging a cover up to make it look as if the 52-year-old grandfather was an insurgent.

Four other servicemen have already pleaded guilty to charges relating to the case and been given custodial sentences ranging from 12 to 21 months.

The killing is one of a string of incidents that has tarnished the reputation of US forces in Iraq. *AFP*

WHAT'S INSIDE

Manotoc DQ'ed but Canlubang keeps PAL title /A30

SPORTS

Website: www.inquirer.net/sports

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Green rules Slam Dunk /A31

Miñoza settles for 2nd in Jakarta

JAKARTA—ALL IT took was a double bogey-6 for Frankie Miñoza to miss out on a European Tour card and an invitation to the British Open.

But that did not stop the Filipino ace from zooming to the top of the Asian Tour's Order of Merit.

Miñoza, gunning down three birdies in a five-hole-stretch from the ninth, gave up two crucial shots on No. 14 and surrendered his share of the lead. He closed out with a 71 and settled for second on 276, one stroke off winner Mikko Ilonen of Finland in the Enjoy Jakarta Astro Indonesia Open at the Damai Indah Golf and Country Club on Sunday.

Ilonen tapped in for bogey at 18 to close out with a 70 and four-round total of nine-under-par 275 for victory in the tournament jointly sanctioned by the European and Asian tours.

The winner gets a two-year exemption in Europe and an invitation to the British Open, one of golf's four Majors.

FRANKIE Miñoza tees off on the 10th hole in Sunday's final round of the Indonesia Open 2007 at the Damai Indah Golf and Country Club in Jakarta. Miñoza went on to birdie the hole to catch leader Mikko Ilonen of Finland. AFP

Miñoza shared second with Australian Andrew Tampion who fired a 69 and India's Shiv Kapur (67).

Still, the runner-up finish in the $1-million tournament was worth $78,296 (abouty P3.8 million) for Miñoza and raised his earnings to $147,156 on the Tour, putting himself on top of the Order of Merit.

South Korea's Suk Jong-yul, who played in the final flight along with Miñoza and Ilonen, finished at 5-under 279 after a 73 to tie for fifth and sixth places with Thailand's Thammanoon Srirot.

Miñoza rallied from three strokes down in the front nine to go toe-to-toe with Ilonen at the back following his second birdie on the 10th.

"I hit it left and had a bad lie," Miñoza said of his double bogey on the 14th. "I hit a flyer again and my third shot was worse than my first as it went into the rough.

"I have been thinking about it (winning) all week," Ilonen told asiantour.com. "I had a really good start to the week."

Final round scores:

275—Mikko Ilonen (Finland) 66 68 71 70

276—Frankie Minoza (RP) 71 68 66 7; Shiv Kapur (India) 67 73 69 67; Andrew Tampion (Australia) 68 66 73 69

279—Jong Yul Suk (South Korea) 69 68 69 73; Thammanoon Srirot (Thailand) 72 67 71 69

280—Alexandre Rocha (Brazil) 72 68 73 67

281—Tony Carolan (Australia) 71 71 67 72; James Heath (Britain) 70 70 70 71; Chapchai Nirat (Thailand) 68 69 72 72

282—Thaworn Wiratchant (Thailand) 75 69 72 66; Henrik Nystroem (Sweden) 70 69 72 71; Christian Cevaer (France) 68 72 71 71; Simon Dyson (Britain) 70 71 71 70; Thongchai Jaidee (Thailand) 72 67 71 72; Scott Strange (Australia) 69 69 72 72; Chawalit Plaphol (Thailand) 65 74 70 73; Rick Gibson (Canada); 72 70 72 68; Gareth Davies (Britain) 71 67 72 72.

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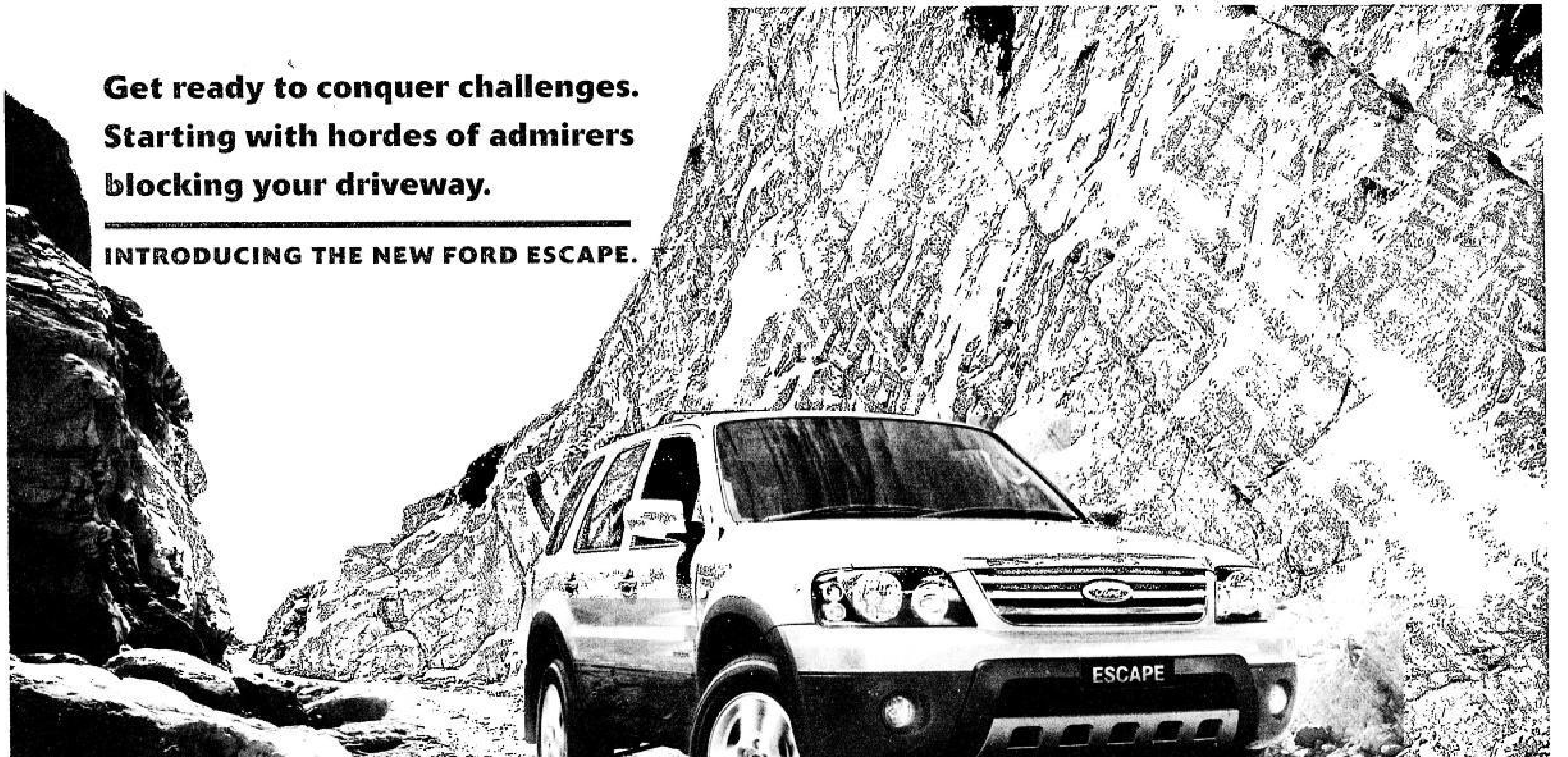

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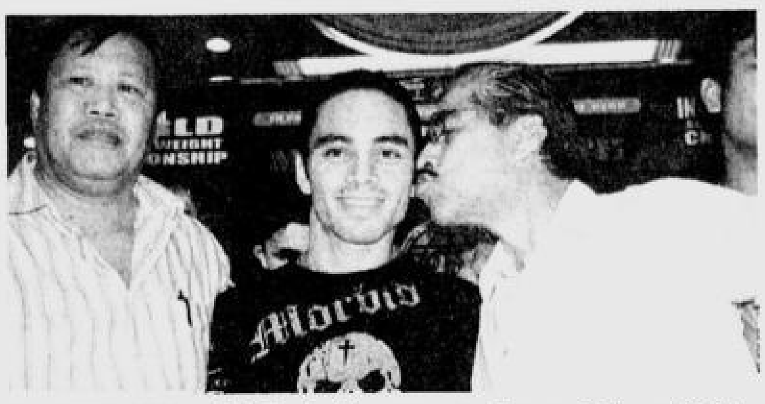
WBO king Montiel vows to stop Gorres in 1st round



FERNANDO Montiel is flanked by promoter Sammy Gello-ani (left) and father Manuel during the press conference.

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

CEBU, PHILIPPINES—REIGNING WBO superflyweight king Fernando Montiel yesterday vowed to stop Filipino challenger Z Gorres right in the first round of their title fight here on Saturday.

Showing no signs of the long journey he took from Mexico to Cebu, Montiel said he knows exactly how to beat Gorres.

"I will knock out Gorres in the first round," said Montiel through an interpreter. "I came here to win."

Montiel, accompanied by his father-manager Manuel Sr. and brothers, spoke during an arrival press conference organized by promoter Sammy Gello-ani at the Cebu Marriott Hotel's Ballroom 1.

Asked about his preparation and how he would fight in front of a hostile crowd, Montiel said he fights his best wherever he is.

"Since early childhood my father has always taught me how to fight in a foreign territory," he said.

Also present at yesterday's press conference was Gorres' manager Michael Aldeguer.

Gello-ani thanked Team Montiel for their professionalism in coming on time. "The Filipino people are happy to welcome you here in Cebu," he said.

"We have the highest respect for Fernando Montiel," said ALA Boys manager Aldegue. "We're looking forward to a great fight."

Manuel Sr. said his son feels good about Saturday's fight and is not affected by the 15-hour flight from Mexico.

"You will not be disappointed," he said. "You will see a great championship."

A press conference will be held on Thursday at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel, where Montiel and Gorres will meet for the first time. The official weigh-in takes place on Friday at the Rajah Park Hotel, the official home of Team Montiel.

WBO president Paco Valcarcel and vice president for Asia Pacific Leon Panoncillo will be arriving on Wednesday.

Golden Boy Promotions vice president Eric Gomez and international matchmaker Sampson Lewkowicz are arriving on Thursday.

Canlubang keeps crown despite Manotoc slip-up

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—ITS TOP STAR FAILED TO count in an unexpected twist, but it didn't really matter as powerhouse Canlubang easily retained its Seniors championship yesterday in the 60th Philippine Airlines Interclub tournament here.

Tommy Manotoc's day-best 55 points went to naught after he signed a wrong scorecard. Canlubang's strength, however, was such that the Laguna-based squad still won by 15 points over a Lusita team whose standouts proved no match in head-to-head clashes with their counterparts in the last round at the Pueblo de Oro course.

"My mistake," said the 58-year-old Manotoc after he realized his error when he went over his scorecard again after the scorekeeping committee had gone over his round and told him he posted 56 points.

The fatal slip was a 3 recorded by his marker, Caloy Coscolluela of Alabang, on his 16th hole where he made a par 4. Before signing it, Manotoc had carefully counterchecked the figures on his scorecard against the score he kept for himself but somehow found no discrepancy.

Canlubang lost seven points as a result with Lino Magpantay's 48 getting counted instead under the eight-to-play, five-to-score format.

But with Bing Bunye and skipper Tony Olives each piling up 50 points and Rolly Viray and Luigi Yulo contributing identical 49 markers, Canlubang, which started the day just six points up on Luisita, still assembled a leading 246 output at Pueblo to clinch its second straight crown on a 498-483 scoreline.

Francis Gaston, six over par on his front nine, rallied to contribute 49 points that emerged as the best score of Luisita for the day. Team captain Iggy Clavecilla managed only 47 after a superb 53 at Del Monte the other day.

Richie Garcia's 48, another 47 by American Tom Culligan and a 46 by Bong de Guzman completed the scoring for Luisita, which missed the services of Freddie Mendoza who failed to tee up due to a bum stomach. Mendoza counted with a 48 in the first round.

Alabang rallied with 239 to salvage third place at 476 with Manila Golf placing fourth, 465-462, over Manila Southwoods, whose Korean star Hur Jeong-tae collapsed in the final round with 44 after a 55 at Del Monte.

Co-host Pueblo de Oro came from behind to capture the Founders crown with 466 as Rey Orimaco chalked up 54 points and Rolly Uy added 50. Last year's champ Wack Wack, led by Stewart Go's 48 points, was third at 454.

"Now everything has happened in my golf career," Manotoc, a longtime former national player, said after his first-ever DQ for signing a wrong scorecard ruined another brilliant stint in the Interclub.

The fourth straight overall title in the 55 years-and-above category that Manotoc blew went to Del Monte's Ireneo Dulfo, whose 55 at his home course yesterday became the tiebreaker in his 101-101 deadlock with Canlubang's Olives.

The win set up Canlubang for another title double with its men's regular team again favored over Manila Southwoods and 2004 champion Del Monte when the centerpiece event starts Wednesday.

A second hole-in-one came in the Sportswriters Division at Del Monte after Fil-Am Hawaii's Chester Matsueda aced the par 3 16th with a 4 iron while playing in the company of Winston Santos of Iloilo, George Bumanglad of Sienna and Jerry Ascalon of Lambia.

Like Victor Gonzales of Lumbia, Matsueda won a roundtrip first class Manila-US ticket.

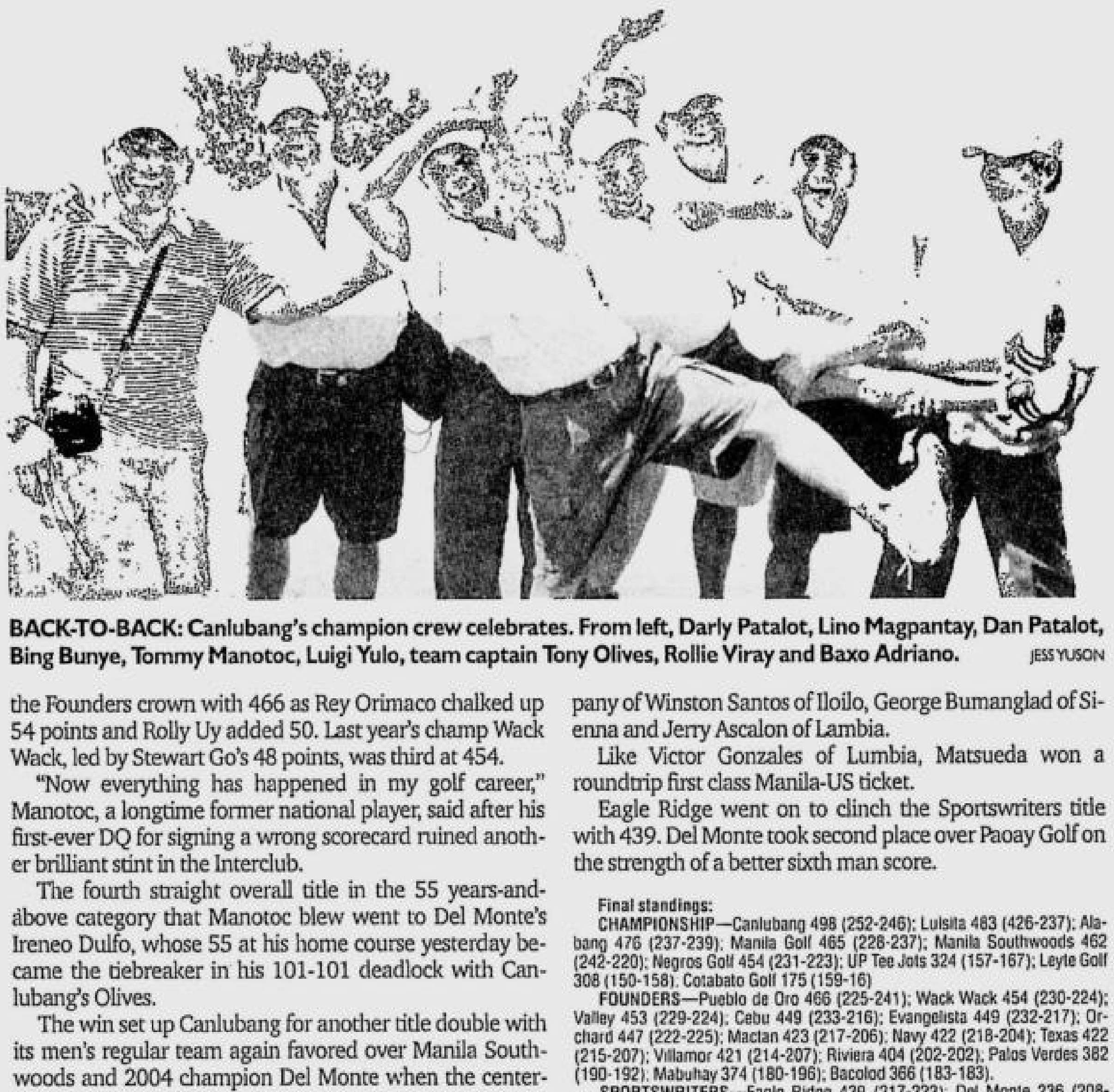
Eagle Ridge went on to clinch the Sportswriters title with 439. Del Monte took second place over Paoay Golf on the strength of a better sixth man score.

Final standings:

CHAMPIONSHIP—Canlubang 498 (252-246); Luisita 483 (426-237); Alabang 476 (237-239); Manila Golf 465 (228-237); Manila Southwoods 462 (242-220); Negros Golf 454 (231-223); UP Tee Jots 324 (157-167); Leyte Golf 308 (150-158). Cotabato Golf 175 (159-16)

FOUNDERS—Pueblo de Oro 466 (225-241); Wack Wack 454 (230-224); Valley 453 (229-224); Cebu 449 (233-216); Evangelista 449 (232-217); Orchard 447 (222-225); Mactan 423 (217-206); Navy 422 (218-204); Texas 422 (215-207); Villamor 421 (214-207); Riviera 404 (202-202); Palos Verdes 382 (190-192). Mabuhay 374 (180-196); Bacolod 366 (183-183).

SPORTSWRITERS—Eagle Ridge 439 (217-222); Del Monte 236 (208-228). Paoay Golf 236 (212-224); Apo 425 (208-217); Baguio 425 (215-210); Team LA 425 (217-208); Sienna Plantation 415 (192-223); Veterans 415 (204-211); Alta Vista 408 (203-205); Hawaii Fil-Am 398 (192-206); Iloilo 390 (192-198); Lumbia 374 (191-183); Bay Area 370 (183-187); Maharlika 368 (188-180); Davao 352 (175-177); Alliance of Golfers 325 (169-156).



BACK-TO-BACK: Canlubang's champion crew celebrates. From left, Darly Patalot, Lino Magpantay, Dan Patalot, Bing Bunye, Tommy Manotoc, Luigi Yulo, team captain Tony Olives, Rollie Viray and Baxo Adriano. JESS YUSON

Ever Mine Now nails 1st Imported Stakes leg

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—EVER MINE NOW DUG deep in the final quarter under Jonathan B. Hernandez yesterday to rule the first leg of the 2007 Imported Stakes Series at the San Lazaro Leisure Park here.

The six-year-old bay mare made her charge by the rail to nip longshot Deputy Stravinsky by half-a-length and time an impressive one minute and 33 seconds for the 1,500-meter race.

Sent off as the slight first choice in the six-horse field with sales of P302,907out of the double handle of P808,633, Ever Mine Now won out in a frenzied drive for home to start her 2007 campaign on a bright note.

The victory was worth P480,000 for owner Ed Dimacuha.

The JM Manalo-steered Deputy Stravinsky, who actually led by a length when the field entered the final bend, settled for the runner-up prize worth P180,000.

Fairy Queen, with Lord Santos aboard, and Danseuse, under Jessie B. Guce, checked in third and fourth for P100,000 and P40,000, respectively.

The field was actually bunched as one in the final 800-meter mark and Deputy Stravinsky shot out of the jam to lead by one length going into the far turn.

But the 26-year-old Hernandez made Ever Mine Now hug the rail throughout even when second choice Glory and Honour set the early pace to benefit from it in the end.

Hernandez applied the whip furiously on the daughter of American Odyssey out of Ever Mine, who responded with a formidable kick in the drive for the wire.

Glory and Honour, incidentally, paid the price and finished dead last under Patty Dilema, just behind longest shot Ziraz.

The next big race happens this Sunday at the Santa Ana Park in Makati with the holding of the Philracom Chairman's Cup.

Coming soon: A true people's champ

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

ROLANDO HISO, FORMER MEMBER OF THE national cycling team, has left his snow-bound backyard in Chicago and was scheduled to arrive in Manila last night.

He's heading straight for hot, summery Cebu.

No, the burly sportsman was not merely escaping terrible sub-zero conditions in Chicago.

In a pre-departure text message, Hiso bared he's driving to Sutukil, the famous seafood eden Erap Estrada had helped popularize, straight from the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

It will be a seafood fiesta first for the homesick *balikbayan* before anything else.

* * *

But before this report strays all the way to the silky, unspoiled Panglao Beach off Tagbilaran in Bohol, an hour and half by ferry boat from Cebu City, Hiso's main mission must be bared.

He's here to be at ringside for the Moment of Truth card in Cebu on Saturday, Feb. 24.

Hiso was in Manila last July for the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar Larios bout at the Araneta Coliseum.

He had seen practically all Pacquiao fights live in Las Vegas, including the Grand Finale showdown wherein the Pacman blasted out the legendary Erik Morales at the Thomas & Mack Center last November.

After witnessing Pacquiao at his devastating best, Hiso flew home from Vegas, stayed put for a week, before next flying to Florida.

There, in Tampa, he witnessed the unbeaten Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista score an easy knockout.

* * *

Hiso is here on a private mission.

He wanted to see for himself the real Boom Boom Bautista, touted as the next Manny Pacquiao.

Yes, he witnessed the unbeaten Bautista feast on yet another foe in Tampa in early December.

Hiso got both excited and intrigued.

But, just like with the ever-growing number of Boom Boom fans, he continued to wonder how truly great this dusky Boholano bomber is.

No, Hiso would not buy the initial suggestion that Boom Boom was being coddled and spoonfed with patsies in most of his early bouts.

However, his appetite for burning ring action got aptly whetted by feeds that Feider Viloria, the Colombian whom Bautista would be fighting on Saturday, is a real deal.

* * *

That info, about Boom Boom's next foe being truly tough, emanated from the camp of respected Cebu sportsman Antonio A. Aldeguer.

Needless to say, with Aldeguer himself taking pains to get a worthy foe for the unbeaten Bautista, Saturday's championship card, where Z Gorres goes for the World Boxing Organization super flyweight crown of Mexican Fernando Montiel, is a must-see.

The set of golden numbers Bautista and Viloria carry in their gloves are both enviable.

Bautista, 20, is 21-0, with 16 KOs.

Viloria, 23, is 19-1-1 with 13 KOs.

In a way, the twin main events should also help determine whether there's boxing in the Philippines outside of a Pacquiao bout.

* * *

Now, this is not to say Boom Boom, who also rose from bitter poverty, has already grown in worth to properly rival Pacquiao in popularity and relevance.

No, sir. The truth is that, there are many boxing devotees who have started asking if Bautista, given the luck and breaks to back his power and talent, would not turn out to be an even better gentleman champion than Pacquiao.

Who knows? With his principles and values, not to mention the guidance of his main patron and handler, Tony Aldeguer, Bautista may not be caught straying into the messy field of Philippine politics.

Let's pray Boom Boom stays true to his calling and, God willing, one day help reform our system of government—instead of jumping in and encouraging the rotten political system here.

Of course, it will take a true people's champ to do that.

SPORTSWATCH

Pasig River 42K launched at Forum

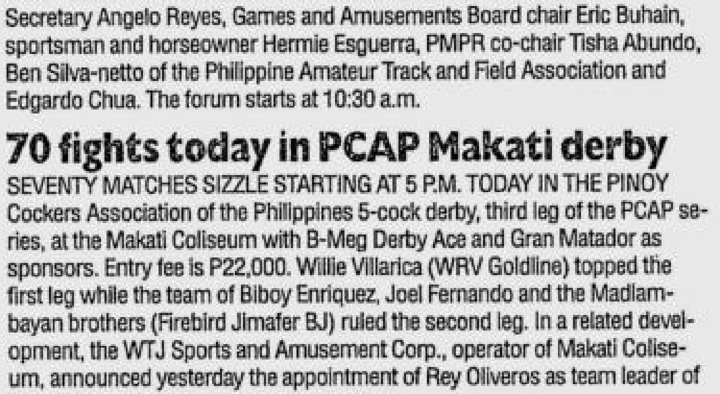
THE PHILIPPINE MARATHON FOR THE PASIG RIVER WILL BE FORMALLY launched during a special session of the PSA Forum tomorrow at the Rizal Park Orchidarium. Former First Lady Amelita "Ming" Ramos heads the guests appearing in the public sports program aired live over dzSR Sports Radio and sponsored by Pagcor, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Manila Sports Council chair Arnold "Ali" Atienza. With Ms Ramos in the session are Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, Games and Amusements Board chair Eric Buhain, sportsman and horseowner Hermie Esguerra, PMPR co-chair Tisha Abundo, Ben Silva-netto of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association and Edgardo Chua. The forum starts at 10:30 a.m.

70 fights today in PCAP Makati derby

SEVENTY MATCHES SIZZLE STARTING AT 5 P.M. TODAY IN THE PINOY Cockers Association of the Philippines 5-cock derby, third leg of the PCAP series, at the Makati Coliseum with B-Meg Derby Ace and Gran Matador as sponsors. Entry fee is P22,000. Willie Villarica (WRV Goldline) topped the first leg while the team of Biboy Enriquez, Joel Fernando and the Madlambayan brothers (Firebird Jimafer BJ) ruled the second leg. In a related development, the WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp., operator of Makati Coliseum, announced yesterday the appointment of Rey Oliveros as team leader of the WTJ Makati stag screening committee.

Big Thursday treat for Roligon cockers

LOYAL PARTICIPANTS IN DERBIES AT THE ROLIGON MEGA COCKPIT IN Parañaque will get a "big treat" from cockpit owner Rolly Ligon on Thursday in connection with the venue's Largahan 5-Cock Derby. Ligon said that once a year, Roligon stages a special cockfest that requires a low entry fee of only P4,400 to accommodate hackfight enthusiasts and new derby aficionados. "With this kind of format, a participant may field two or three entries and therefore has a bigger chance to win the championship," Ligon said. Two-cock elimination rounds will be held on Feb. 22, 24 and 26 while the three-cock championship takes off on Feb. 28.



PIATA GOLF AT STA. ELENA: The Philippine IATA Agents Travel Association and Galileo Phils. are co-presenting the Piata Cup on Feb. 26 at Sta. Elena Golf Club. Shaking hands after signing the sponsorship deal are Travelport marketing director George Harb and Piata Cup overall chair Frank Khouri. Looking on are Piata president Aileen Clemente and Galileo regional manager Andrew Ling.

Manganti, Duay rule Alabang's Mango Tee

BUSINESSMEN ARNOLD MANGANTI and Arnold Duay posted their best round in tougher conditions and won the 23rd Mango Tee tournament of the Alabang Country Club via a countback recently.

Manganti and Duay, college classmates at Mapua, made a 77 in a morning round and improved to an 81 in their return to the course when the winds blew hard and the greens were faster to submit one of two tournament-best 158 totals.

Their big second-day effort also proved crucial as it was used to break their tie with Rey Carpio and Doods Antipuesto who carded 82-76 also for 158. They settled for the Class D plum.

Caloy Coscolluela and King Stehmeier, players who once manned the golf operations of the club, romped off with the low gross award of the tournament co-presented by Pilipinas Shell and Smart Communications. They shot 65 and 67 for a 12-over-par 132.

Nilo Samia-Norberto Tolentino (Class A), Polo Pantaleon-Ben Alfonso (Class B), Renato Kapauan-Steve Albano (Class C) also joined this year's batch of winners.

Samia-Tolentino scored 71-81-152 to beat Mike Osmeña-Tony Olives by four.

Pantaleon-Alfonso had 76-72-148 and had a point more than Jovy de Ocampo-Ed Garcia.

Kapauan-Albano compiled 74-70-144 to nip Arthur Chung-Mario Santos by one, while Carpio-Antipuesto were eight up on Ricky Crisostomo-Rey Velasco.

Amateurs to 'OJT' with PBA squads

By June Navarro

THE COUNTRY'S TOP AMATEURS MAY SUIT up for the Philippine Basketball Association even without passing through the draft via an apprenticeship program approved by the board to help teams that will be affected by the league's commitment to the national cause.

INTAL

CASTRO

The board of governors approved a rule that allows PBA teams, whose players will be tapped to represent the country in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association and Fiba-Asia tournaments, to hire the likes of JC Intal, Ken Bono, Jason Castro, Mark Borboran and Marvin Cruz on an interim basis.

"The program will allow amateur players to experience and learn the ropes in the pro league," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala. "It's like an on-the-job training for them."

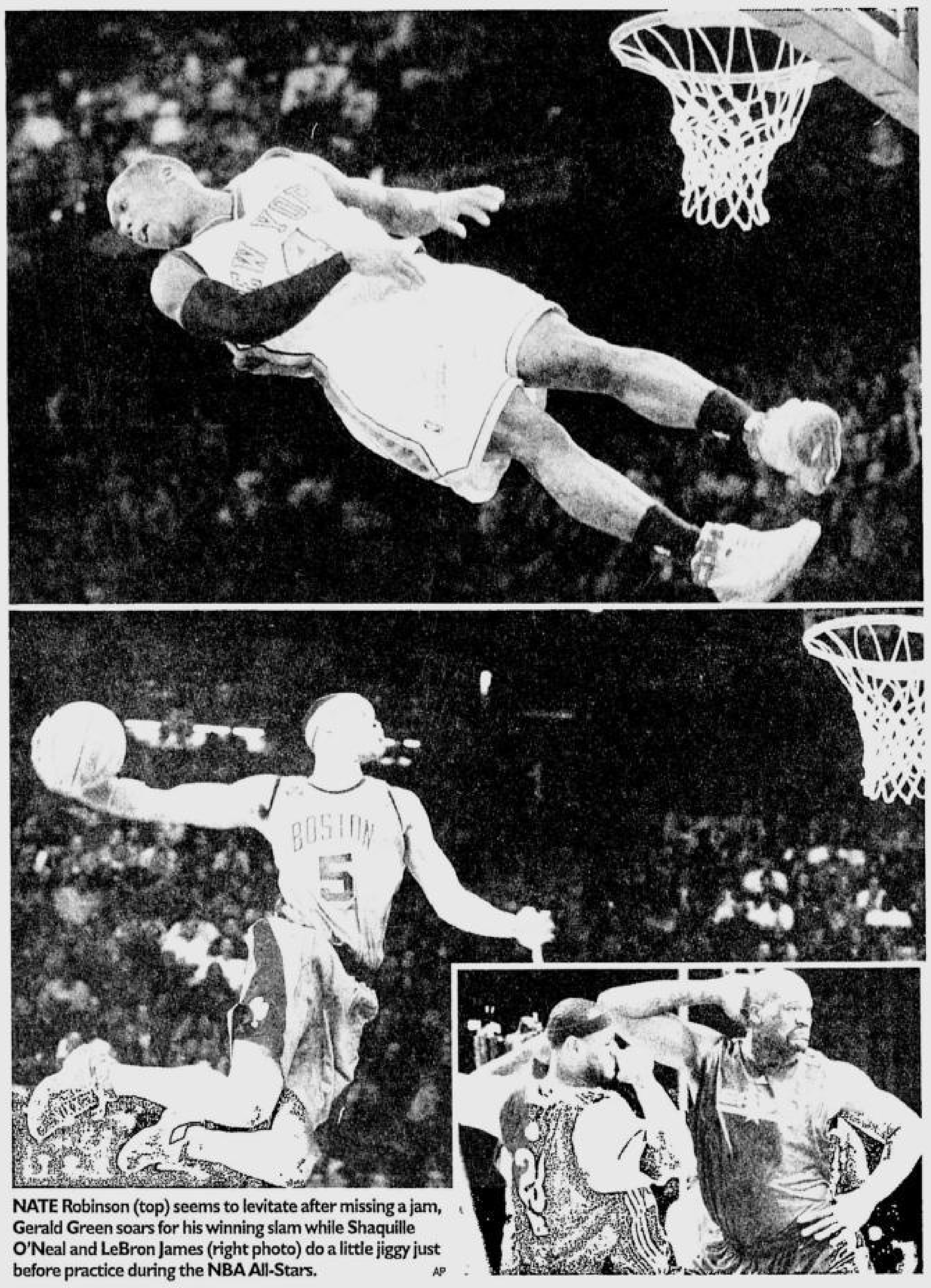
The players will be put through an apprentice draft and the team with the most regulars contributed to the national team will pick first. In case of a tie, the order will be determined by their finish in the ongoing Philippine Cup.

The country will be fielding an all-pro team to the Seaba tournament in May and the Fiba-Asia tile in July. The 12 players and two alternates named to the national team will not be allowed to suit up for their PBA clubs in the Fiesta Cup.

Amateurs drafted will be paid as much as P40,000 apart from educational assistance, medical insurance coverage and other perks.

Only players who have never applied for the PBA draft and have at least seen action in the PBL or other commercial leagues are eligible.

Green new 'sultan of slam'



NATE Robinson (top) seems to levitate after missing a jam, Gerald Green soars for his winning slam while Shaquille O'Neal and LeBron James (right photo) do a little jiggy just before practice during the NBA All-Stars. AP

LAS VEGAS—BOSTON'S GERald Green capped All-Star Saturday with an acrobatic leap over a table to win the dunk contest, and Miami's Jason Kapono fell just short of an event record while winning the 3-Point Shootout.

Green, the Celtics' 20-year-old swingman, performed his two most memorable dunks in the first round before that final leap over a table bearing the All-Star game logo for a windmill jam.

He first made an electrifying two-handed slam on an alley-oop pass off the side of the backboard from teammate Paul Pierce in the first round. Green then jumped over fellow finalist Nate Robinson while wearing the No. 7 Celtics jersey of 1991 dunk champion Dee Brown—and shielding his eyes in the crook of his elbow in an homage to Brown's memorable no-look dunk.

"It's tough to be creative since just about every kind of dunk has been done," Green said. "I tried to pull something out nobody had seen before."

Green easily won over the five-man judges' panel of Michael Jordan, Julius Erving, Dominique Wilkins, Kobe Bryant and Vince Carter—particularly when Robinson, the diminutive 2006 champion, missed nine straight times on his final dunk before finally landing a one-handed spin move.

Earlier, Kapono beat stars Gilbert Arenas and Dirk Nowitzki with a final-round 24—just one shy of the event record. Kapono, the fourth-year pro who finally blossomed with the Heat this season, tied Mark Price's final-round record and fell just one point shy of Craig Hodges' overall mark with an impressive performance leading off the last round.

Memphis' Mike Miller was eliminated from the six-man competition despite posting an 18, the highest score by a first-round loser since 1996.

The evening got off to an appropriately silly start in the Shooting Stars competition, featuring three-person teams composed of an NBA player, a WNBA player and a former NBA great from the same city.

Detroit's team of Chauncey Billups, Swin Cash and Bill Laimbeer won when Chicago's team was disqualified from the final round for shooting out of order.

Dwyane Wade defended his title in the Skills Challenge with a perfect final run through the obstacle course to beat Kobe Bryant in 26.4 seconds. *AP*

THEY may have won their divisions in contrasting fashions, but there is no doubt Sandra Araullo (left) and George Vilog enjoy the same winning feeling on the podium.

Returning Vilog, Araullo rule Subic nat'l triathlon

By Jasmine W. Payo

CLARKFIELD, PAMPANGA—THE PRODIGAL son of triathlon hasn't loss his competitive drive.

Despite staying away from the sport for nearly three years, George Vilog reestablished himself in the top tier after returning to the site of one of his old triumphs and ruling the 2007 National Triathlon Championship yesterday.

The 30-year-old racer, who had just served a suspension from the national team for disciplinary reasons, showed renewed focus by setting a personal-best of 2 hours, one minute and 53 seconds in the 1.5K swim-40K bike-10K run Olympic distance race at the Clearwater Country Club inside the Clark Special Economic Zone.

"I want to be the champion again," Vilog said in Filipino. "I stopped for almost three years. I want to come back."

The 5-foot-3 Vilog, who dominated the national championship from 2002 to 2004, broke his previous record of 2:02:52 set in 2002 in Subic.

Vilog edged 2005 Southeast Asian games bronze medalist Arland Macasieb, who faded in the last two loops of the run leg for a 2:02:49 finish.

"I cramped up," admitted Macasieb.

Since the event was one of three qualifying races for this year's Southeast Asian Games, Vilog came into the competition with a clear purpose.

"I was expecting to be in the top three," he said. "My target is the SEA Games. If I continue to do well in training, I think I can get the gold in the SEA Games."

While Vilog pushed himself to the limits, Sandra Araullo raced without pressure but still came out on top in the women's division with a time of 2:18:34.

"I was just running my own race," said Araullo, who's admittedly focusing more on her masters studies in physics at the University of the Philippines. "I didn't want to pressure myself, winning was just a pleasant bonus."

Araullo, a 2005 SEAG silver medalist, finished nearly eight minutes ahead of fellow national team member Mimi Lucas, who clocked in at 2:26:30.

Vilog trailed as far as 120 meters in the run leg before running past pace-setter Macasieb in the final loop.

"During the transition (from bike to run), I decided to pace myself," said Vilog. "I wanted to recover (my energy) first, before pushing it hard. So I let Arland run ahead."

Also earning third place honors were Mark Peter Candelaria at 2:04:29 in the men's division and Lea Coline Langit at 2:36:11 in the distaff side.

Top junior triathletes Joash Serraro (1:05:22) and Kim Mangrobang (1:17:27) ruled the men and women's sprint division.

Phelps sinks own butterfly record

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI—Michael Phelps broke his own world record in the 200-meter butterfly in 1 minute, 53.71 seconds at the Missouri Grand Prix on Saturday.

Phelps was nine hundredths of a second faster than his record-setting time from August 2006. He beat Tamas Kerekjarto of Hungary by more than six seconds.

"I didn't expect that, that's for sure," he said. "Coming in tonight, I wanted to go 1:55, 1:54 the fastest. Right now, I guess things are going well."

Phelps, who earned six gold medals and two bronzes in the 2004 Olympics, plans to compete in 17 events in the world championships next month in Melbourne, Australia, defying most of his peers' choices to specialize in one or two events. He will race in two more events on Sunday and three on Monday. *AP*

Mickelson up by one

LOS ANGELES—PHIL MICKELSON looked unbeatable until a 30-inch putt spun around the rim of the cup, giving him the first of three bogeys on the back nine that cost him a cushion, but ultimately not the lead in the Nissan Open on Saturday.

Mickelson got up-and-down for birdie on the par-5 17th and shot 2-under 69 in the steamy sunshine at Riviera, giving him a one-shot lead over Padraig Harrington (70).

Mickelson was at 13-under 200. He will be in the final group with Harrington and Rich Beem, who delivered the theatrics by making a hole-in-one on the 14th hole that sent him leaping atop the red sports car that he won for his ace.

More than getting a new car, Beem suddenly has a chance at his first trophy since the 2002 US PGA Championship at Hazeltine. *AP*

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MILO MARATHON

Canillo rules Malolos elims; Sugalan prevails

MALOLOS CITY—MICHAEL CANILLO OUTkicked Gerald Sabal in the final kilometer to top the Bulacan leg of the 31st National Milo Marathon elimination race Sunday that started and ended at the Bulacan Sports Complex.

Canillo, a 19-year-old runner from Lanao del Norte, clocked one hour, seven minutes and 41 seconds over the 21K distance and won P10,000.

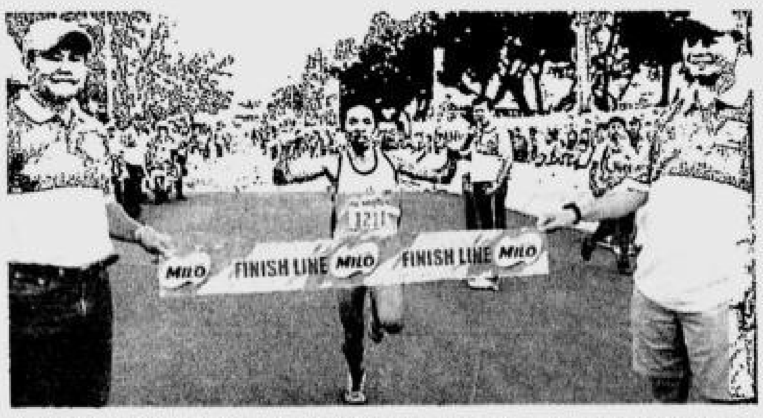
Vanessa Sugalan shared honors with Canillo by ruling the women's race in 1:40:45, beating veteran Mila Paje, who checked in with a time of 1:42:30 and Rosemarie Radaza (1:45:35).

Sugalan, 19, of Meycauayan town, Paje and Radaza won P10,000, P6,000 and P4,000, respectively.

Sabal, younger brother of 2005 Milo Marathon champ Cresenciano, timed 1:08:30 for second place worth P6,000, while Modesto Madalang came in third (1:10:49) to win P4,000.

The top three finishers in both the men and women's races qualified to the marathon's grand finals slated Nov. 18 in Metro Manila. They will match running skills against the other provincial top finishers for the top prize of P75,000.

Sabal tried to match pace with the wiry Canillo but surrendered the front to the eventual winner's on the approach to the sports complex.



VIRTUALLY UNCHALLENGED: Michael Canillo about to hit the tape held by Milo executive Pat Goc Ong (left) and Willie Suarez of Nestlé.

"*Determinado akong manalo* (I was determined to win," said Canillo. "*Ngayon pa lang umpisahan ang ensayo para paghandaan ko ang finals* (I'll start training for the finals right away."

About 5,000 runners answered the starting gun fired by Mayor Danilo Domingo, assisted by Milo Sports Events executive Pat Goc-Ong, race director Rudy Biscocho and Bulacan Sports Council chief Anthony Villanueva. Goc-Ong awarded the trophies to the winners.

Action in the province-hopping annual foot race shift to Tarlac City on Feb. 25 for the fourth leg of the 24-leg elimination run.

Repeat wins for Herrera, Manipol in Kalikasan run

HERRERA

MANIPOL

NATIONAL ATHletes Rene Herrera and Mercedita Manipol retained their respective titles in the eighth annual DZMM Takbo Para Sa Kalikasan 10K event yesterday at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

Herrera, the steeplechase gold medalist in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, finished the race in 32 minutes and three seconds.

Manipol, on the other hand, reasserted her supremacy in the 10K distance and preserved her unbeaten streak since 2003, including the last five stagings of this race.

"*Umpisa pa lang inunahan ko na sila, tapos nagtuloy-tuloy na ako hanggang* (I took the lead right from the start and preserved it up to the) finish line," said Herrera.

Alquin Bolivar of La Salle-Dasmariñas overtook veteran Reynaldo delos Reyes with three kilometers left to nail second place in 32:48. Delos Reyes settled for third spot with a time of 32:53.

"This is part of my preparations for the defense of my 10,000-meter gold in the SEA Games," said Manipol, who clocked 37:13, in Filipino.

She also topped the Adidas King of the Road 10K road race in Baguio City last week.

Ailene Tolentino of La Salle-Dasmariñas tried to keep pace with Manipol in the first five kilometers along Roxas Boulevard but faded when exhaustion set in. She settled for second in 39:28, well ahead of third placer Ana Whitehouse (48:14).

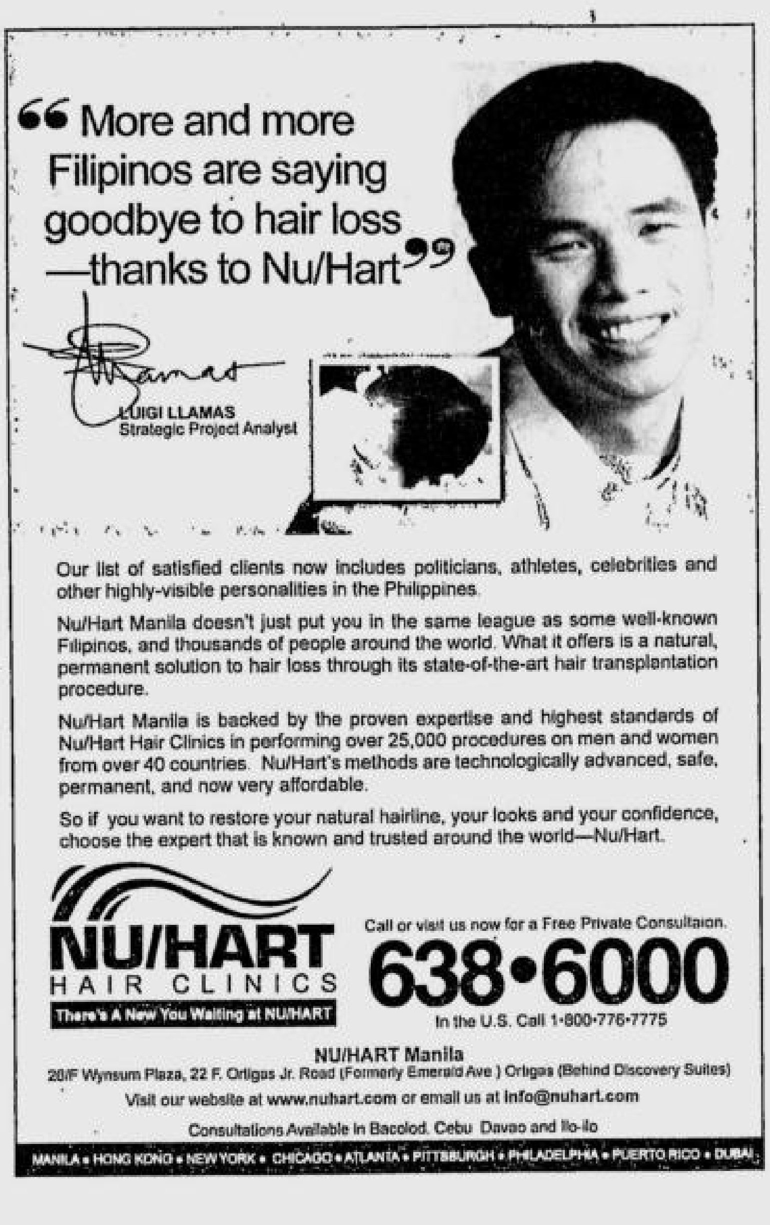
The top three finishers in the 5K side event were Abraham Barcarse Jr. (17:00), Nelbert Ducusin (17:10) and Ben Alejandrino (17:18) in the men's race and Emma Mangago (20:22), Nhea Ann Barcena (20:39) and Liza Yambao (21:40) in the women's run.

The 3K age-group fun run was ruled by Joshua Ricaflanca and Michelle De Vera in the 6-9 age group and Raymond Sabordo and Evangeline Villegas in the 10-12 category.

Proceeds of the event will go to the rehabilitation project of the La Mesa Watershed.

Talisay 6-cocker kicks off

MORE THAN 200 ENtries plunge into action today in the much-awaited P3-million "Away-Kalipay sa Talisay" 6-cock derby at the New Talisay Tourist and Sports Center in Talisay City. The most prestigious cocking event ever in Cebu is hosted by sponsor Thunderbird's corporate model Sonny Lagon, Robert Yu and Ricoh Masucol. Thunderbird Power Feeds and Univet will conduct a free gamefowl management seminar on Feb. 23 starting at 1 p.m. at the venue. Among those vying for the championship are boxing hero Manny Pacquiao, Gerry Ramos, Chavit Singson and Butch Pichay.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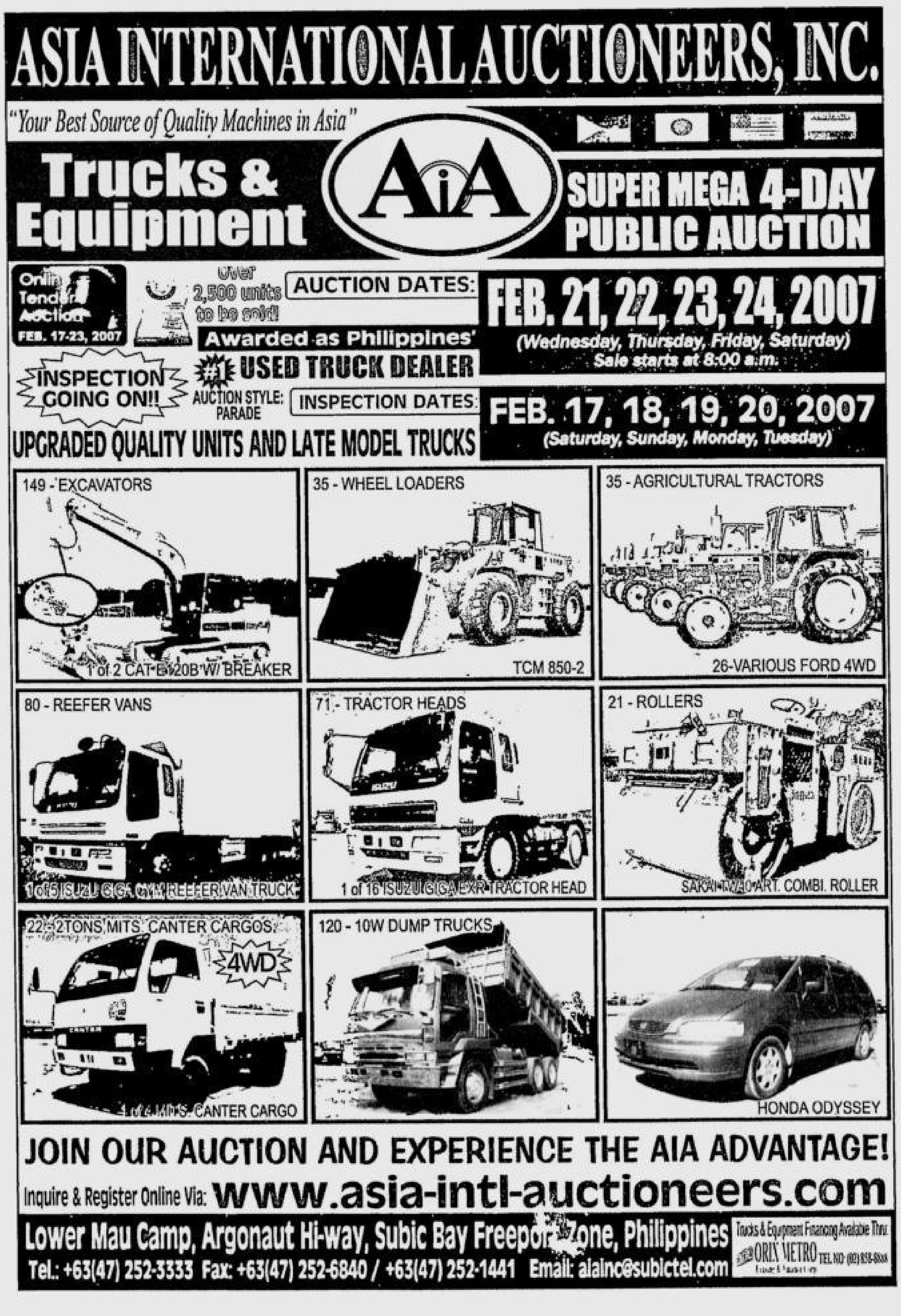
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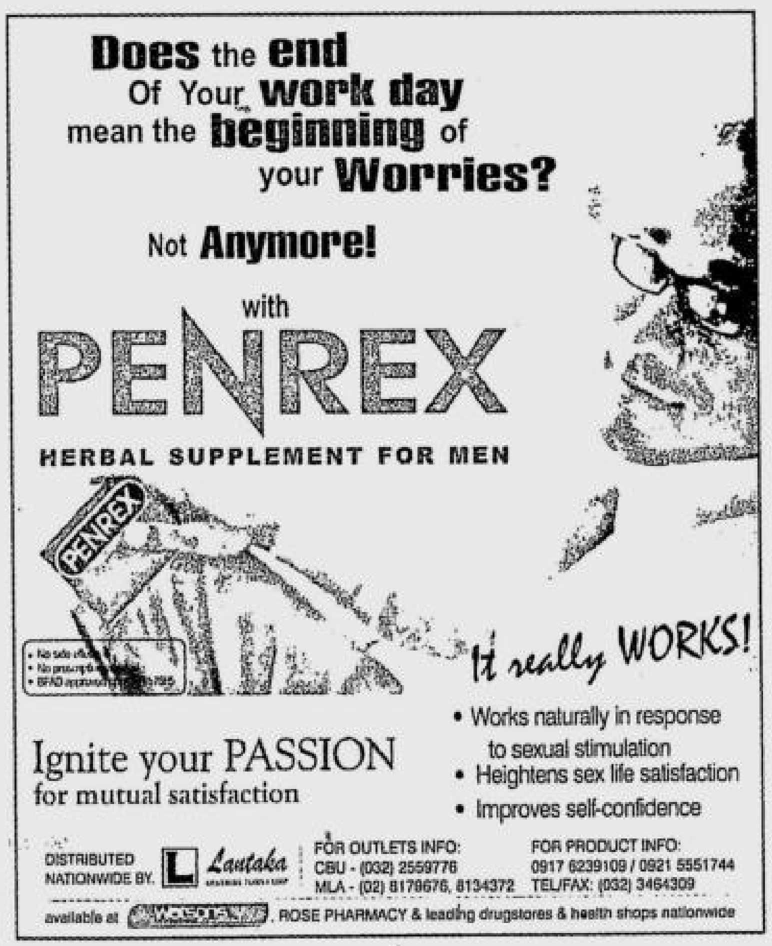
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Malaysian eyes jatropha deal in RP

Joint venture with PNOC unit seen ready by midyear

By Abigail L. Ho

MALAYSIAN FIRM BIOGREEN ENERGY SDN BHD IS preparing to sign an agreement with PNOC Alternative Fuels Corp. (PNOC-AFC) on the establishment of a jatropha nursery and plantation in two different locations in the country.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Biogreen director Wong Chee Meng said the memorandum of understanding between his company and PNOC-AFC had already been drafted after four to six months of discussions.

The MOU should be signed some time within this month, he said.

Should the signing push through, he said contract detailing would start by March and would take around one or two months.

Details to be discussed would include the land that would be used for the planned seedling nurseries and jatropha plantations, seedling supply, crude oil processing for both local consumption and export, and biodiesel pricing, he said.

Under the MOU, he said Biogreen should be able to produce about 30 million seedlings within two years in each of the two locations that would be agreed upon by the two parties.

This should be enough to supply seedlings for PNOC-AFC's planned 700,000 hectares of jatropha plantations all over the country.

"The Philippines is an important site for us. We've already conducted a feasibility study in cooperation with PNOC-AFC, and there is so much potential here. The competitiveness of the Philippines is there," he said. "We're looking at (Asia as a whole) because we believe that the oil it can produce will greatly help its economy."

He said Biogreen and PNOC-AFC should finalize their contract within the first half and start implementing it within 2007.

The establishment of a biodiesel refinery was also on the drawing board, he said, although it was not part of current negotiations between Biogreen and PNOC-AFC.

In an earlier interview, PNOC-AFC president Peter Anthony Abaya said that apart from Biogreen, among those interested in undertaking biodiesel-related projects were Korea's Samsung Corp., Japan's Sumitomo Corp. and JGC, the US' National Biofuels, Malaysia's HDZ, and Brunei National Petroleum Co.

Local firms Chemrez Technologies

MALAYSIAN/ B9

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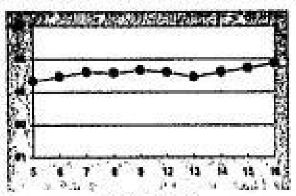

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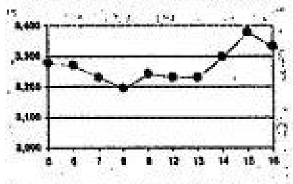

(See stock market report on Page B4)

Weak trading seen

INVESTOR SENTIMENT IN THE STOCK market is seen to be subdued this week as investors in Hong Kong and other Asian markets celebrate the Chinese New Year, analysts said.

The stock market is also seen getting its fair share of profit-taking, which is deemed to be healthy after prices hit levels not seen

WEAK/ B2

IN THIS ISSUE

AGI buys stakes in Megaworld, distiller for P20B /B4

NTC seen to curb anti-competition practices of telcos /B11

Pag-IBIG plans ₱2-B bond float

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BIGGEST FINANCIER OF THE government's housing program, the Home Development Mutual Fund (more popularly known as Pag-IBIG Fund), plans to issue P2 billion worth of five-year bonds by March.

Land Bank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines have been mandated to arrange the offering, according to officials of Landbank.

"It's a re-issuance of the P2 billion bonds that matured in December," said Landbank vice president Alex Macapagal, citing investors' demand for the housing agency's IOUs.

The Bureau of the Treasury will set the bidding date for the proposed bond float but the target will be to complete the issuance by early March, Macapagal said.

Pag-IBIG Fund was created on June 11, 1978, by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1530, later amended by PD 1752 and Republic Act No. 7742.

Under its short-term loan programs covering multipurpose and calamity loans, the agency has extended a record P18.54 billion to its

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Group pushes energy bill

By Abigail L. Ho

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP WORLD-wide Fund for Nature-Philippines is urging the Senate to pass the Renewable Energy Bill during its special sessions today and tomorrow to enable the country to take advantage of clean and indigenous energy resources.

In a statement, WWF-Philippines climate and energy policy officer Raf Senga said the future of the country's renewable energy sector depended on the senators, led by energy committee chair Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, who had two more days to finish all pending tasks of the 13th Congress.

He said that if the bill would not be passed during the special session, it might take another decade for a similar bill to reach the level of the Senate.

"It took 10 years before the bill was passed in the Lower House. This special session is the perfect time to approve it and seal our country's future," Senga said. "The country needs the (Renewable Energy) Bill, and we need it now. We need to have it in place to ensure our children's future."

According to WWF-Philippines, the bill would pave the way for the greater use of energy sources that do not produce carbon dioxide emissions—the greenhouse gas believed to be the biggest cause of climate change worldwide.

Not only is the bill expected to result in a cleaner Philippines, but it is also seen to boost investments in the sector due to the incentives that it will provide.

The case for unified financial regulation

No Free Lunch

Cielito F. Habito

BANGKO SENTRAL GOVERNOR AMANDO Tetangco Jr. last week signified the openness of the BSP to setting up an integrated regulatory body that will combine the functions of the BSP, Insurance Commission (IC) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Not a few were surprised by the statement, given the BSP's long-standing resistance to the very idea of such integration.

The seeming change of heart may be indicative of the recognition of the growing complexity of the financial markets, and the regulatory gaps that could occur—and have in fact occurred—as a result of such complexity.

Fast-growing

The financial services industry, composed of banks, non-banking financial institutions and insurance companies, has been growing fairly rapidly in the past couple of years.

Last year, the industry's 9.5 percent output growth outpaced that of the entire services sector, whose 6.3 percent growth mostly propelled the entire economy's 5.4 percent growth.

In particular, it was the non-banks—which include investment houses, mutual fund companies, security dealers, brokers and pawnshops—that zoomed ahead with a 22.1 percent growth, while banks grew at 9.6 percent and insurance by 2.6 percent.

The healthy growth rate the industry currently enjoys attests to its recovery from the hiatus brought about by the Asian financial crisis almost 10 years ago.

Along with this growth comes increasing complexity in the financial products the industry offers. For example, an insurance policy now provides more than just insurance. Often, it is a saving/investment and loan product.

The ups and downs of the pre-need industry have become well-known.

Banks and investment houses now offer a range of simple to extremely complex financial investment instruments beyond the usual savings and time deposits, including the recently controversial and misunderstood UITFs, and various types of derivatives.

It is often said that the financial services industry is capable of developing a product for every conceivable need or opportunity—and make a lot of money in the process.

Vanishing lines

But is your money safe when you invest it in these financial products?

Small savers (unlike high net worth individuals who invest in the millions, even billions) often do not understand the risks and returns that come with their various saving and investment options.

The issue is crucial, especially now as we seek to channel more of the billions of dollars in OFW remittances toward investments, and failures of financial institutions could destroy the lives of millions overnight.

This is where the role of the financial regulators in protecting the welfare of the investing public is critical.

In the Philippines, we have several of them, each addressing a different segment of the financial services industry. The main ones are BSP for the banks, IC for insurance companies, SEC for corporations, and the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA) for cooperatives.

The challenge lies in the way the lines distinguishing these various segments from one another are quickly vanishing.

Apart from financial products becoming more similar (as they combine features of saving/investment with insurance, for example), firms are also widening their scope of services.

Thus, the leading banks have become huge financial conglomerates that now also own insurance companies, investment houses and securities firms. Metrobank has Philippine AXA Life, Philippine Charter, First Metro Investment, ORIX Metro Leasing and Finance, Multi-Grade Securities, and so on; Bank of Philippine Islands has BPI Capital, BPI Investment Management, BPI Leasing, BPI Securities, Ayala Life Assurance Inc., FGU Insurance, and so on.

Regulatory gaps

Under this situation and given the ever-widening array of complex financial products coming out of the industry practically every day, ambiguities have arisen as to which regulatory body should take care of new products as they come out.

Case in point is pre-need, which had long been supervised by SEC, whereas many argue it is an insurance product and should have been under the IC all along.

There have been times when certain financial products had gone unregulated for extended periods—thereby subjecting their investors to great risks—because none of the regulators claimed them to be under their jurisdiction.

The Financial Sector Forum (FSF) was established to partly address the problem, via better coordination among the financial regulators. It seems inadequate, however, to satisfactorily resolve such regulatory gaps when they arise—as they will continue to arise.

A more lasting solution via an integrated and comprehensive financial regulatory system is clearly needed, even overdue.

Governor Tetangco's recent statement appears to signal government's intention to move more deliberately in this direction.

This is a welcome development in the interest of public welfare, especially in an economy whose lifeblood industry has lately become a key growth driver.

Eagle Watch

The next Ateneo Eagle Watch Economic and Political Briefing will be on Wednesday morning, Feb. 21 at the Ateneo Rockwell Campus.

For details and reservations, please contact Joannie Tongol at 929-7035 (e-mail jtongol@gmail.com).

I apologize for giving an erroneous e-mail address earlier (joannietongol@gmail.com). Those who may have attempted to communicate via that address could do so again using the correct one.

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

Weak . . .

From page B1

in 10 years, analysts added.

"The trend may be slightly down but it's a healthy correction. In the local market, even if foreign investors are on holiday, local investors may try to do some window dressing," said Joseph Roxas, president at Eagle Equities Inc.

Analysts also said some foreign markets are closed next week and this could lead to thin trading volumes.

Reuters reported that most Asian markets, including Hong Kong and South Korea, will stay shut early next week, while China and Taiwan will be closed all week to celebrate the Year of the Pig. There will be no trading for Wall Street on Monday for the President's Day holiday.

Astro del Castillo, managing director at First Grade Holdings, said the market was expected to sober up after gains last week since "technically" prices have gone up to "overbought" levels.

"The index could hover around 3,300 to 3,400. Bulls must rest before any run-up again. Positive corporate news, specially earnings results of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), could awaken the bulls," Del Castillo said. ***Elizabeth L. Sanchez***

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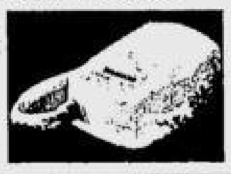

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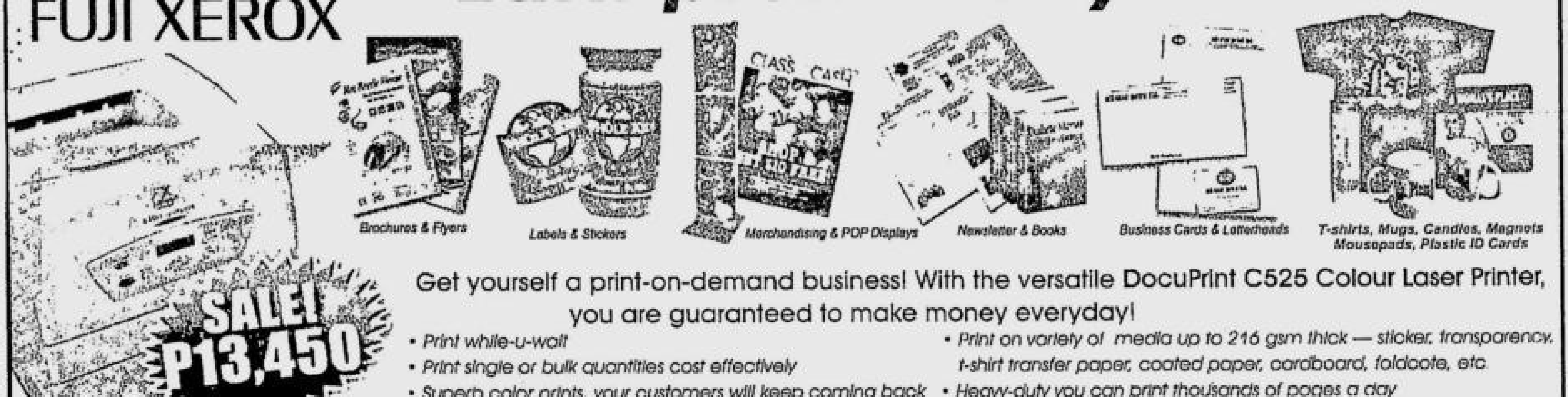
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Gov't lists options to cut NFA deficit

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE CASH-STRAPPED NATIONAL Food Authority can raise as much as P5 billion by selling zero-coupon bonds currently used as collateral for its debts in order to support a much-needed deficit-reduction program, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said.

In a recent roundtable discussion with the INQUIRER Business staff, Yap said the government was looking at ways to plug the NFA's deficit, particularly by unlocking cash values from various assets such as liquidating its holdings of bonds, selling a third of its 300 warehouses nationwide and maximizing the use of the 120-hectare Food Terminal Inc. property in Taguig City.

Some economists have long urged the government to end the NFA's costly rice subsidy program. In one study, for instance, the World Bank said the government policy of "buying high and selling low" as a means of keeping staple prices affordable should be reconsidered, saying such a policy was not sustainable.

But Yap said it was not an option to shut down the NFA despite its financial drag on the public sector as this would mean yielding the market for the country's main staple to traders.

He explained, however, that there were ways to reduce the NFA's deficits, such as by monetizing some bondholdings currently used as collateral for debts.

"A program I started in NFA a few years ago was to pull all of our short-term debts into long-term. We set aside our credit lines to buy Philippines debt paper and used these debt paper to get financing," Yap said.

"So today if we discount them and monetize all of those securities, I understand we would earn P4-P5 billion, which we could set aside for retiring some loans," Yap said.

Years ago when the national government scrimped on giving sovereign guarantees to government-owned and -controlled corporations to better control its contingent liabilities, the NFA resorted to collateralized debt financing facilities to raise money.

Under such scheme, the borrower gets a loan in excess of what it needs and uses the differential to buy zero-coupon bonds

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NOTICE OF POSTPONEMENT OF THE ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING OF BALABAC RESOURCES AND HOLDINGS, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Directors of **BALABAC RESOURCES AND HOLDINGS CO., INC.** with principal address at 7/F Allied Bank Center, 6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City resolved in its meeting held on February 12, 2007 to postpone the Company's Annual Stockholders' Meeting scheduled on February 23, 2007 at the Kachina Room, Century Park Hotel, Malate, Manila at 3:00 p.m. to a later date to be announced.

This announcement shall serve as notice to all parties concerned of the foregoing matter.

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AGI buys stakes in Megaworld, distiller for ₱20B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ALLIANCE GLOBAL GROUP INC. (AGI), THE Filipino-owned holding firm that owns a sizeable block in the local McDonald's franchise, is acquiring shares in brandy maker Emperador Distillers Inc. (EDI) and property giant Megaworld Corp. for roughly P20 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, AGI said the acquisitions would pave the way for the consolidation of interests held by businessman Andrew Tan in various industries under AGI as the holding company.

Tan chairs both Megaworld and AGI and is the owner of Emperador Distillers.

AGI will buy all of EDI's common shares for P3 billion in cash, making the distiller a wholly owned subsidiary of AG.

AGI will also acquire 5.25 billion shares of Megaworld or roughly 25 percent of the company's outstanding equity, for about P17 billion. AGI, through its wholly owned subsidiary Newtown Land Partners, owns 21 percent of Megaworld. The new acquisition will increase AGI's consolidated equity investment in Megaworld to 46 percent.

"AGI will bring together all our investments in real estate, food and beverage and the quick service restaurant industry. The company will serve as a primary vehicle to expand these businesses and look into various opportunities for growth," Tan said in a statement.

As a new conglomerate, Tan said AGI would embark on aggressive property development through Megaworld, a leader in the property market's two fastest-growing segments: Mid-income housing and business process outsourcing office. Megaworld expects to generate a net income of P2.88 billion in 2007.

AGI's food and beverage business, on the other hand, will be expanded through EDI. EDI manufactures Emperador Brandy, touted as the largest selling brandy in the world.

Meanwhile, AGI's quick service restaurant operations will be boosted by McDonald's, which expects to double its current restaurant outlets to 500 over the next five years.

"AGI has ensured a strong momentum for growth with the dominant position of Megaworld and EDI in their respective industries and McDonald's reputation as a strong global brand. AGI is also looking into new areas where growth is sustainable," Tan said.

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	-	1,050,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,200,000	1,100,000
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	Please Call	-
Baguio Country Club	600,000	540,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	60,000	50,000
Camp John Hay	330,000	300,000
Canlubang	450,000	420,000
Capitol Hills	40,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,800,000	1,500,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	100,000
Club Filipino	100,000	90,000
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	90,000	75,000
Forest Hills "B"	150,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Luisita Golf "A"	350,000	270,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	100,000	-
Makati Sports Club "B"	200,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	13,000,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,500,000
Manila Polo	Please Call	2,700,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	300,000	280,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	750,000	650,000
Manila Yacht Club	250,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	230,000	200,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	650,000	580,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	180,000	-
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	150,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	300,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "C"	400,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	150,000	140,000
Spa & Lodge	580,000	450,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,300,000	1,150,000
Sta. Elena "B"	2,150,000	1,800,000
Summit Point "A"*	280,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	320,000	280,000
Tagaytay Highlands	850,000	830,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Please Call	620,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	-	7,500,000

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CLUB	SHARES AVAILABLE SELLER	BUYER*
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/1,300,000*	1,050,000
Alta Vista A/B*/Corp.**	-	300,000/Pls. Call*/Pls Call**
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Camp John Hay	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Canlubang Golf	500,000	420,000
Canyon Woods	100,000	-
Capitol Hills	50,000	-
Cebu Country Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Celebrity Sports	Pls. Call	80,000
Club Filipino	50,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	170,000/Pls. Call*/Pls. Call**	200,000*
Eastridge A/B*	150,000*	-
Evercrest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	90,000/150,000*	120,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	12,600,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,600,000
Manila Polo	Pls. Call	2,700,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	300,000/Pls. Call*	-
Makati Sports Club A	200,000	-
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	280,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	160,000	-
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	220,000	Pls. Call/550,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	180,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	180,000/Pls. Call*/350,000**	150,000
Punta Fuego	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Quezon City Sports Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	80,000/170,000*/250,000**	Pls. Call*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	100,000*
Splendido Taal	200,000	Pls. Call
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	-	1,500,000
Subic Golf	190,000	-
Summit Point A	300,000	-
The Palms Country Club	380,000	330,000
Country Club at Tagaytay Highlands	380,000	-
Tagaytay Highlands	650,000	630,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club A/B*	150,000/180,000*	-
Valley Golf	200,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	Pls. Call	80,000
Wack Wack Golf	8,000,000	7,500,000

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OUR 25TH YEAR

SELLING		BUYING	
BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	550K	ALABANG A	1.050M
CAMP JOHN HAY	300K	BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	PLS CALL
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	500K	CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	PLS CALL
CELEBRITY SPORTS CLUB	100K	CLUB FILIPINO	50K
COUNTRY CLUB @ TAGAYTAY	300K	CLUB PUNTA FUEGO	PLS CALL
EAGLERIDGE B	280K	EASTRIDGE B	100K
EAGLERIDGE C	350K	FONTANA-D	40K
FORESTHILLS C	200K	FOREST HILLS C	PLS CALL
MAKATI SPORTS	150K	MANILA GOLF CORP	12.8M
MANILA POLO CLUB	PLS CALL	MANILA GOLF IND	11.8M
MANILA SOUTHWOODS A	290K	MANILA POLO CLUB	2.7M
METROCLUB A	150K	MANILA SOUTHWOODS B	650K
MIMOSA IND	220K	MIMOSA C-3	PLS CALL
MIMOSA CORP	600K	MT MALARAYAT C	PLS CALL
MT MALARAYAT A	200K	SPA & LODGE	450K
ORCHARD A	170K	STA ELENA A	1.4M
ORCHARD C	350K	STA ELENA B	2.0M
QUEZON CITY SPORTS-B	150K	TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	600K
RIVIERA GOLF B	150K	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	PLS CALL
SPA & LODGE	500K	THE PALMS	PLS CALL
THE PALMS	450K	TOWER CLUB C	PLS CALL
VALLEY GOLF	200K	VALLEY GOLF	180K
VALLE VERDE IND	90K	VALLE VERDE	PLS CALL
WACK WACK	6.4M	WACK WACK	PLS CALL

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 16, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	10.75	13	10.25	12.5	2,130,400
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	64	64.5	64	64.5	2,550,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	71	71	69.5	69.5	2,147,700
China Banking Corp.	890	890	885	890	12,520
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	30	30	30	30	100
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.52	0.54	0.52	0.53	13,720,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	117	117	112	115	130,350
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	68.5	68.5	67	67.5	6,296,100
Philippine National Bank	53	53	51.5	51.5	55,600
Phil. Savings Bank	61	62	61	61	3,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	43	43	42	43	439,000
Security Bank Corp.	81.5	87	81.5	87	597,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	66	66.5	64.5	64.5	63,600
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.6	6.2	5.6	6.2	7,031,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	33	35	33	35	14,500
Manulife Financial Corp.	1650	1650	1650	1650	920
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2	2	2	2,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	550	560	540	550	122,160
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2130	2135	2130	2135	700
Ivantage Corp.	1.76	1.78	1.74	1.74	4,363,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	47,002,000
First Gen Corp.	58	58	57	57.5	1,038,300
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	81	81	78	78	881,000
Manila Electric Co. A	78.5	78.5	77	77	409,900
Manila Electric Co. B	79	79.5	78	78	560,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.7	9.8	6,003,000
Petron Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.7	9,677,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	5,260,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.32	1.32	1.28	1.28	689,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.85	4.1	3.85	4	363,000
Cen Azucar De Tarlac	3.9	3.9	2.8	2.8	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	28	28.5	27.5	28.5	157,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	48	46.5	47	313,500
RFM Corp.	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.5	314,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.6	539,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.47	690,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65	65	64	64	169,000
San Miguel Corp. B	77	78	77	78	213,100
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.1	2.12	2.08	2.08	340,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	19.25	18.75	19	10,177,900
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.7	1.78	1.66	1.74	40,478,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.45	4.5	1,487,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.4	8.5	8.3	8.4	599,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6	6	6	6	6,000
Republic Cement Corp.	6.4	6.6	6.4	6.6	2,156,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.4	3,065,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	100,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.31	0.32	81,650,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	80,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.013	556,800,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	64,000,000
Ayala Corp.	655	655	635	640	450,850
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.85	0.87	0.81	0.82	4,340,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.2	8.2	8	8.2	10,991,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	4.1	4.2	3.5	3.55	191,133,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.0675	0.0675	52,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	385,000
APC Group Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.43	16,760,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	97,600,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	6,435,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.58	1.7	1.58	1.66	303,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc	10	10	10	10	15,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.15	4.2	3.95	4	28,544,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.4	7.4	299,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.1	5.2	5	5.2	1,082,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.28	0.32	0.28	0.32	340,000
House of Investments Inc.	3.1	3.1	3	3	591,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.25	1,346,600
Keppel Holdings	1.98	1.98	1.86	1.9	223,000
Keppel Holdings B	2	2	2	2	20,000
Medco Holdings	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	800,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.57	0.6	0.57	0.59	300,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	7	7.5	6.8	7.5	3,011,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.36	2.6	2.36	2.46	6,866,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	3,800,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1,500,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.72	0.74	0.72	0.73	560,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	7,200,000
SM Investments Corp.	395	395	390	390	428,170
South China Resources Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	100,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.68	1.7	91,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	230,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	70,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17.25	17.25	16.75	16.75	21,097,700
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	20,000
Belle Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.42	1.44	16,158,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.4	1.42	1,092,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.8	1.9	1.76	1.8	133,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	2,200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.95	3.8	3.9	3,030,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.48	2.48	2.42	2.48	270,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.8	1.84	1.8	1.84	200,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.82	1.84	1.82	1.84	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	1,000,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.225	0.23	0.22	0.22	950,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.75	0.75	40,780,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	7,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	4,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.74	244,772,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.25	610,000
Interport Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	67,700,000
Interport Res. B	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	10,600,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	5,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	4,530,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.9	0.92	0.89	0.89	7,280,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	4,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	3.1	3.25	3.05	3.2	107,056,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.2	5.5	5	5.2	1,446,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.37	0.4	0.37	0.37	6,570,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.5	210,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	19.75	21.25	19.75	21	6,055,600
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.8	0.82	0.78	0.79	17,940,000
SM Development Corp.	4.05	4.05	3.95	3.95	1,481,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12.5	12.5	12	12.25	12,118,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.64	0.64	540,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.125	0.115	0.12	17,520,000
Zipporah Rlty Hldgs Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	10,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26	24.5	24.5	295,800
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.02	1.06	1.02	1.04	22,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2.02	2.02	1.96	1.96	9,974,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1390	1390	1375	1375	17,680
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	7.1	7.1	6.9	7	3,933,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2615	2615	2595	2595	198,860
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.37	0.39	0.36	0.37	64,480,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	1,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.5	2.55	2.5	2.5	1,031,000
IPVG Corp.	4.95	4.95	4.75	4.75	431,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.38	2.38	2.3	2.3	1,412,000
Philweb Corp.	0.04	0.042	0.039	0.04	601,700,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	26.5	28.5	26.5	27	1,597,500
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.14	328,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.48	2.6	7,953,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	990,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.86	0.87	0.85	0.87	3,790,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	77,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.6	3,433,000
Paxys Inc.	27	27.5	27	27.5	283,900
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	15,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6	5.8	5.8	624,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.2	6.2	5.9	5.9	330,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	166,100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	782,000
Benguet Corp. A	12	12	11.25	11.5	110,600
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.85	2.85	2.7	2.7	51,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.3	1.38	1.3	1.36	128,919,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	10,820,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	2,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.027	871,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.031	0.031	0.03	0.03	548,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	312,900,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.05	4.1	4	4.05	5,544,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.5	17.75	18	954,200
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.73	0.74	0.72	0.72	2,050,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.3	1.34	1.28	1.34	3,317,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	3,460,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	464,500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	100,700,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	499,400,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.75	10.75	10	10.25	167,700

CURRENCIES

February 18, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.760630	1.000000	48.2700
Japan	Yen	0.006382	0.008390	0.4050
United Kingdom	Pound	1.485130	1.952500	94.2472
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097408	0.128062	6.1816
Switzerland	Franc	0.616914	0.810110	39.1040
Canada	Dollar	0.654474	0.860437	41.5333
Singapore	Dollar	0.496009	0.652103	31.4770
Australia	Dollar	0.595965	0.783515	37.8203
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.017693	2.652661	128.0439
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202823	0.266652	12.8713
Brunei	Dollar	0.494397	0.649984	31.3747
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000111	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.022842	0.030030	1.4495
UAE	Dirham	0.207239	0.272457	13.1515
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.314700	63.4606
Korea	Won	0.000814	0.001070	0.0516
China	Yuan**	0.098076	0.128941	6.2240
Denmark	Kroner	0.134159	0.176379	8.5138
India	Rupee	0.017323	0.022774	1.0993
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217634	0.286123	13.8112
New Zealand	Dollar	0.527044	0.692905	33.4465
South Africa	Rand	0.105621	0.138860	6.7028
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023119	0.030394	1.4671

₱1B/yr needed for coco industry rehab

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE COCONUT INDUSTRY IS HARD-pressed to raise P1 billion a year for the rehabilitation of farmlands ravaged by a series of strong typhoons that hit the country in 2006 and help raise coconut production at least to normal levels.

According to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, a significant number of trees had to be replaced even before the typhoons came, most of which were 60 years and older.

Data from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) show that P714.4 million worth of coconut trees were damaged by Typhoon Reming that ravaged southern Luzon in late November last year, affecting some 196,000 farmers.

"CIIF Oil Mills Group has been identified to spearhead rehabilitation efforts but there has been difficulty (in securing money)," Yap said.

The CIIFOMG comprises six coconut oil milling companies funded by the controversial coconut levy or the Coconut Industry Investment Fund.

"This is a very serious situation considering that the Philippines has remained the world's top exporter despite the declining state of our coconut farmlands," the agriculture chief added.

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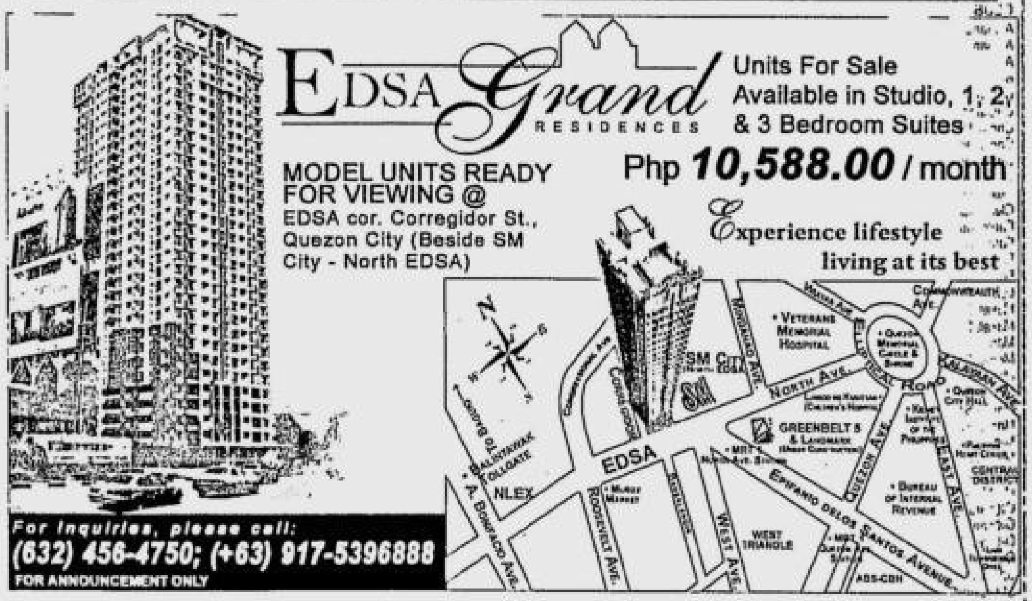
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More forex liberalization measures readied

Cap on noncommercial dollar purchases to be raised to $15,000

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS plans to raise the limit on foreign exchange that clients can buy from banks for noncommercial purposes, including overseas travel, to $15,000 from the current cap of $5,000 per transaction.

This forms part of the foreign exchange liberalization package mulled by the policy-making Monetary Board, BSP sources said.

The package also includes a substantial increase in the cap on banks' allowable dollar stockpiling—or overbought position—to 20 percent of unimpaired capital from the current 2.5 percent. This, however, will have to be matched by a corresponding 20-percent limit on the oversold position.

The sources said these proposals were discussed by the Monetary Board during a recent informal meeting. Some board members, however, were not convinced of the merits of the proposals.

"We'll bring them back to the informal MB meeting for further study," an official said.

The Monetary Board holds the informal meetings also known as 525 meetings, named after the number of the room where the sessions are being held every Monday ahead of the policy-making Thursday meetings. These informal meetings are being held for MB members to deliberate on policies before the items are officially put in the Thursday meeting agenda.

Other sources said that while these limits were proposed by the BSP's research department, the figures were "not yet final" because they would first have to be justified to the MB.

By waiving the documentation requirements for a greater amount of nontrade transactions, the BSP is continuing the foreign exchange liberalization that was started in the 1990s but was disrupted in 1997 due to the the Asian currency turmoil.

"It's a good move because when you go abroad, $5,000 is too little," a banker said.

At present, dollar purchases for trade purposes are subjected to tedious documentation requirements, such as submission of true copies of supporting documents, commercial invoices, shipping documents and notarized application to purchase foreign exchange.

In the meantime, the 20-20 percent overbought/oversold formula discussed by the BSP is in line with the prevailing foreign exchange limits in most countries in Asia.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. earlier said the package prepared by the BSP would include liberalization of certain items in the current account and capital account transactions, such as forex transactions for trade in services and travel and the $6-million dollar cap on outward foreign investment by residents.

The current and capital accounts are key components of the balance of payments or BOP, which in turn measures the total foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

The current account records the trade in goods and services as well as cash transfers, such as from migrant workers while the capital account includes flows related to investment in business, real estate, bonds and stocks.

Bankers are also hoping that the BSP would again allow banks to operate foreign exchange trading subsidiaries, which was banned in previous years to prevent speculative attacks against the local currency.

In contrast to Thailand's recent move to curb capital inflows, the Philippines is set to liberalize restrictions on capital outflows to hedge against the heavy inflow of foreign money from overseas Filipino workers and foreign portfolio investors.

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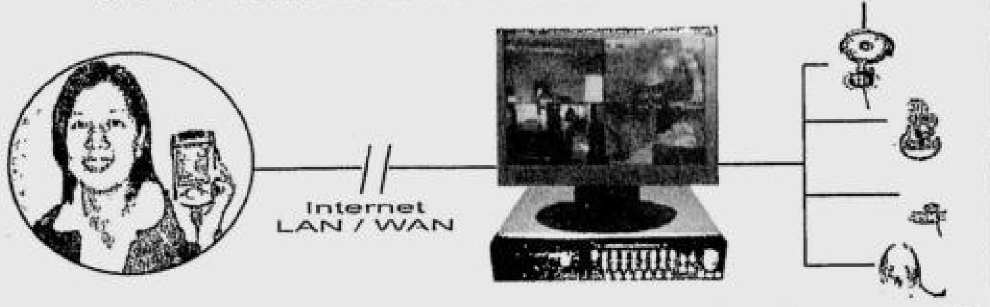

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We, therefore, call for the immediate implementation of your plans for the expansion of EDSA MRT.

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Today, it takes us only 30 minutes to traverse a 17-kilometer distance that took us close to two hours before the advent of EDSA MRT.

Today, we enjoy an air-conditioned transportation means that charges us lower fare than when it began its service – a total irony in Philippine transport history.

BUT WE FEAR THE EDSA MRT SYSTEM MAY NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE HUGE GROWTH OF PATRONAGE.

Our commuter ranks have swelled from just over 100,000 EDSA MRT passengers per day when the system began, to close to half a million a day riders today.

Our fellow commuters from the North still have to suffer conventional transport means to connect to the north end of the system.

MADAME PRESIDENT:

The number of EDSA MRT train coaches has remained the same;

The distance serviced by the EDSA MRT System has remained the same.

We, therefore, ask you to put the expansion of the EDSA MRT in your priority project list and implement your vision for the EDSA MRT so we, the commuters of EDSA may look forward to the continuing efficiency of a dependable light rail transit system:

1. Additional trains and coaches to ease the current passenger congestion;
2. The northward expansion of the line to benefit our fellow commuters from northern Metro Manila and the northern parts of Luzon.

We ask you to implement your vision soonest before the din of politics overshadow the aspiration of the commuters of EDSA.

EDSA PARA SA MASA MOVEMENT

MRT 3 expansion, extension pushed

A CIVIC ORGANIZATION HAS CALLED FOR the expansion and extension of the light rail transit system along Edsa in view of an unprecedented rider patronage and to enable the system to attain sustained efficiency.

The Edsa Para sa Masa said the Metro Rail-Transit 3 might have already used up its full capacity. The group claims that the current daily ridership of MRT-3 has reached close to half a million passengers.

Data obtained from the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), however, showed that the current average daily ridership was already 400,000 on weekdays and 398,000 on weekends.

The group said it "recognizes the valuable role the Edsa MRT plays in the lives of daily commuters."

The system services the route through 13 stations and connects North Triangle in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Manila passing through the Makati central business district.

The group warned that the system might not cope with the huge growth in patronage if it would not be expanded and extended as soon as possible.

The group claims it opposed organized efforts to stop the construction of the Edsa system some 10 years ago.

"We proved the erstwhile critics of the system wrong," the group said. "We were right: An Edsa MRT would help us get to the country's important business districts faster and easier; would help reduce pollution; and would free us, Edsa's commuters, from the tyranny of an antiquated transportation system," it added in a statement.

The group said it was concerned that the delay in the expansion and extension of the system might lead to a diminution of the high quality of commuter service provided by the system today.

The group specifically called for the addition of more trains and coaches and the implementation of plans to extend the North Triangle end of the system all the way to Monumento.

Pag-IBIG . . .

From page B1

more than six million members nationwide as of end-2005. This was an increase of 8 percent from the previous year's release of P17.13 billion. The year likewise saw more housing loans approved for individual housing borrowers at P15.29 billion.

Over the last few years, the fund has streamlined its operations and provided its members simplified business processes. Among the measures it carried out were the reduction of documentary requirements on loans and lending services; reduction of standard time for processing members' loans, claims and in responding to members' concerns; putting up One Stop Shops for business transactions and a smart queuing system (Q-servicing) especially during peak periods; putting in place a "No lunch break" customer service; and promoting a system for electronic/online client servicing and linking with private and public banks for the use of their electronic payment facilities.

Under the law, the Pag-IBIG Fund is required to set aside an amount equivalent to no less than 70 percent of its annual net income and declare this as dividends, later credited proportionately to the members' total savings.

₱1B/yr needed ...

From page B5

According to CCIFOMG, there are some 3.1 million hectares nationwide that are classified as coconut farmlands, of which 15 percent or 450,000 hectares need to be replanted.

These account for land with trees too old to bear nuts and areas that had been dedicated for coconut farming but are idle.

Aside from that, 750,000 hectares need to be fertilized as the land lacked nutrients to support nut-bearing trees.

"We need some two kilos of fertilizers per tree to help increase production, but there is just no funds readily available for this," Yap said.

In a report made available last December, PCA said 42.64 million coconut trees were damaged, and four out of five are in the Bicol region. Damaged trees in Bicol represent about a tenth of the country's 330 million coconut-bearing trees.

PCA says firms can meet fuel blend demand

By Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL PRODUCERS OF COCONUT-BASED BIODIESEL PRODUCTS can meet the expected demand for fuel blends once the Biofuels Act of 2006 goes into full swing in the second quarter of the year, a ranking official of the Philippine Coconut Authority said.

To ease concerns that domestic coconut oil production may not be enough to meet the country's biodiesel requirements, PCA deputy administrator Carlos Carpio said that local producers have the capacity to produce more than the estimated 70 million liters of coconut oil required for the 1-percent fuel blend.

The PCA, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, has just completed its assessment on the capacity of producers to supply the required fuel requirements.

At present, the combined capacity of the seven main manufacturers is placed at 205.3 million liters.

Carpio said this would be enough to fulfill the country's biodiesel requirements.

According to the PCA official, Chemrez Inc. has the capacity to produce 70 million liters; Senbel Fine Chemical Inc., 36 million liters; Romtron Philippines, 300,000 liters; Lion Chemical Corp., 6 million liters; Mt. Holly Coco, 4 million liters; Pure Essence, 60 million liters; Atson Coco Inc., 24 million liters.

Carpio said that some of the the firms are even free to export their products to Japan.

With the Biofuels Act, the country may no longer have to rely on foreign oil as much. The law also promotes government efforts to tap renewable sources of energy.

Three months after the law takes effect, vehicles that run on diesel will be required to use fuel products with a one-percent blend.

The mandated blend will rise to 2 percent after two years.

The PCA admits that, in the long term, the production of coconut oil may be strained to the limit.

Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Oscar Garin said some P4.3 billion in investments are needed to fertilize suitable coconut farms.

Garin said that about 200,000 hectares of coconut plantations had been severely damaged by a series of strong typhoons that pummeled the country during the last four months of 2006.

He said it would take the country's coconut farmers another two to three years before they could bring production back to its normal level of no less than 2.2 million metric tons a year.

Typhoon damage also reduced copra output in 2006 by around 10 percent to 980,000 tons—the lowest since a severe drought hit the country in 1998, the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines (Ucap) said in a report.

Copra is the dried coconut meat from which the oil is extracted.

Customs seeks higher reward for its workers

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS IS LOBBYING FOR a higher reward for its employees after the agency contributed to the state coffers more than it was required to in 2006.

The BOC's cash collection last year, in the form of taxes and duties on imported goods, reached P192.2 billion. This was P2.2-billion higher than the official cash collection target of P190 billion assigned to the agency.

Under the Lateral Attrition law, which took effect last year, the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue shall be entitled to a monetary reward should they exceed their full-year collection target. The BOC and BIR personnel who fail to meet their goals will be subject to penalty, either demotion, reassignment or dismissal.

According to Customs deputy commissioner Rey Umali, the reward to be distributed among employees has a minimum amount equivalent to 15 percent of the excess collection. But if the excess collection is more than 30 percent of the goal, then the reward should be equivalent to 20 percent of that excess collection.

He said the Revenue Performance Evaluation Board (RPEB), which determines the guidelines on the implementation of the Lateral Attrition law, currently looks at granting incentive amounting to 15 percent of the P2.2 billion in excess collection. This is equivalent to P330 million to be distributed to concerned BOC employees.

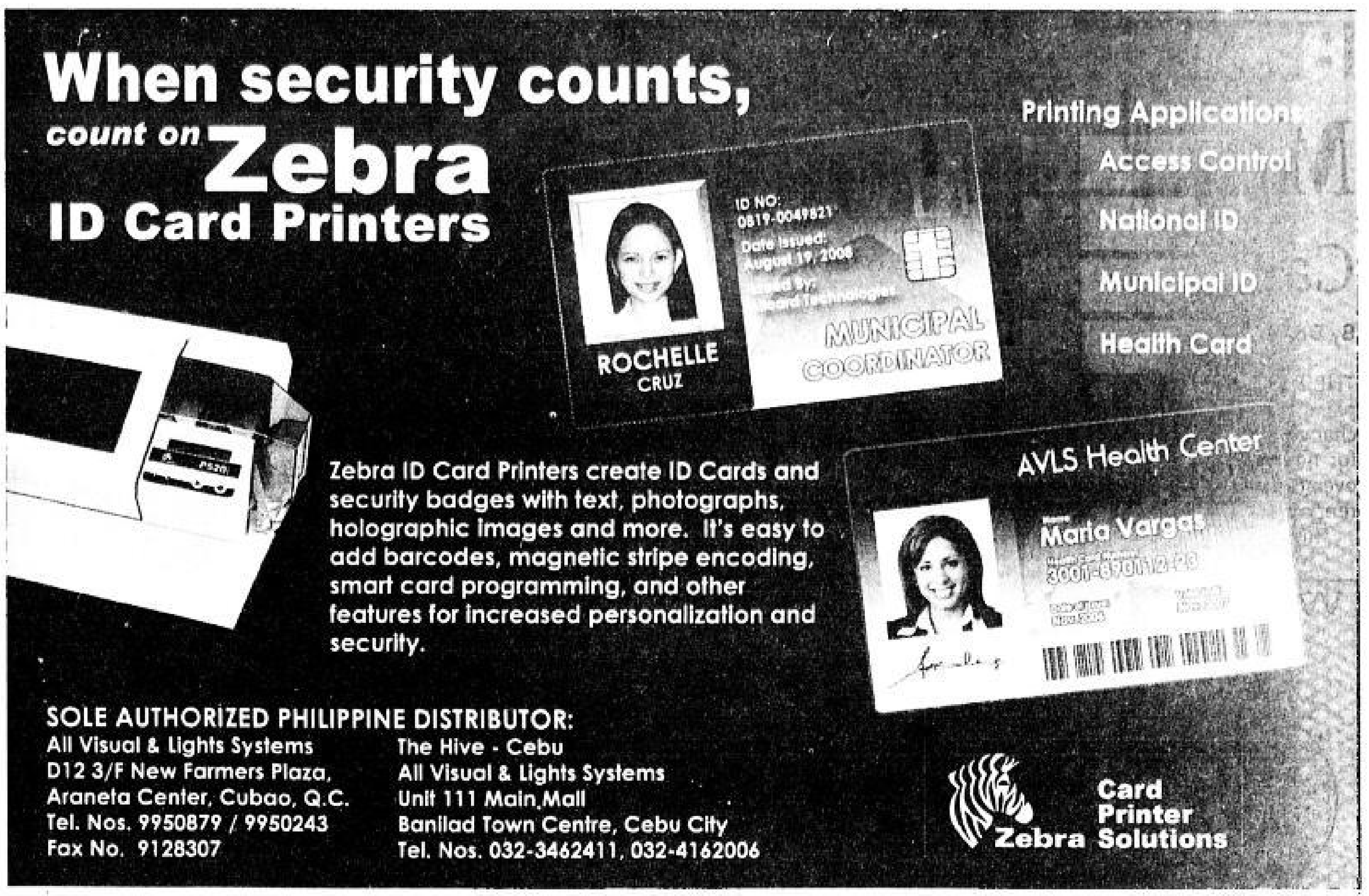
But Umali said the BOC's excess collection should actually be higher, at P7.5 billion, if the target was adjusted to a realistic figure.

The P2.2 billion in excess collection was based on the target of P190 billion. Umali said, however, that the realistic target should be P184.7 billion.

He explained that the official cash collection target of P190 billion was based on certain macroeconomic assumptions that were not met.

For instance, the peso was assumed to settle at an average of 52 to 54 last year when the target was set. But the peso strengthened to unexpected levels last year, breaching the 50-to-a-dollar mark and hovering in the 49 level toward the end of the year.

Imported goods are valued in dollars. An appreciation of the peso, therefore, makes imports



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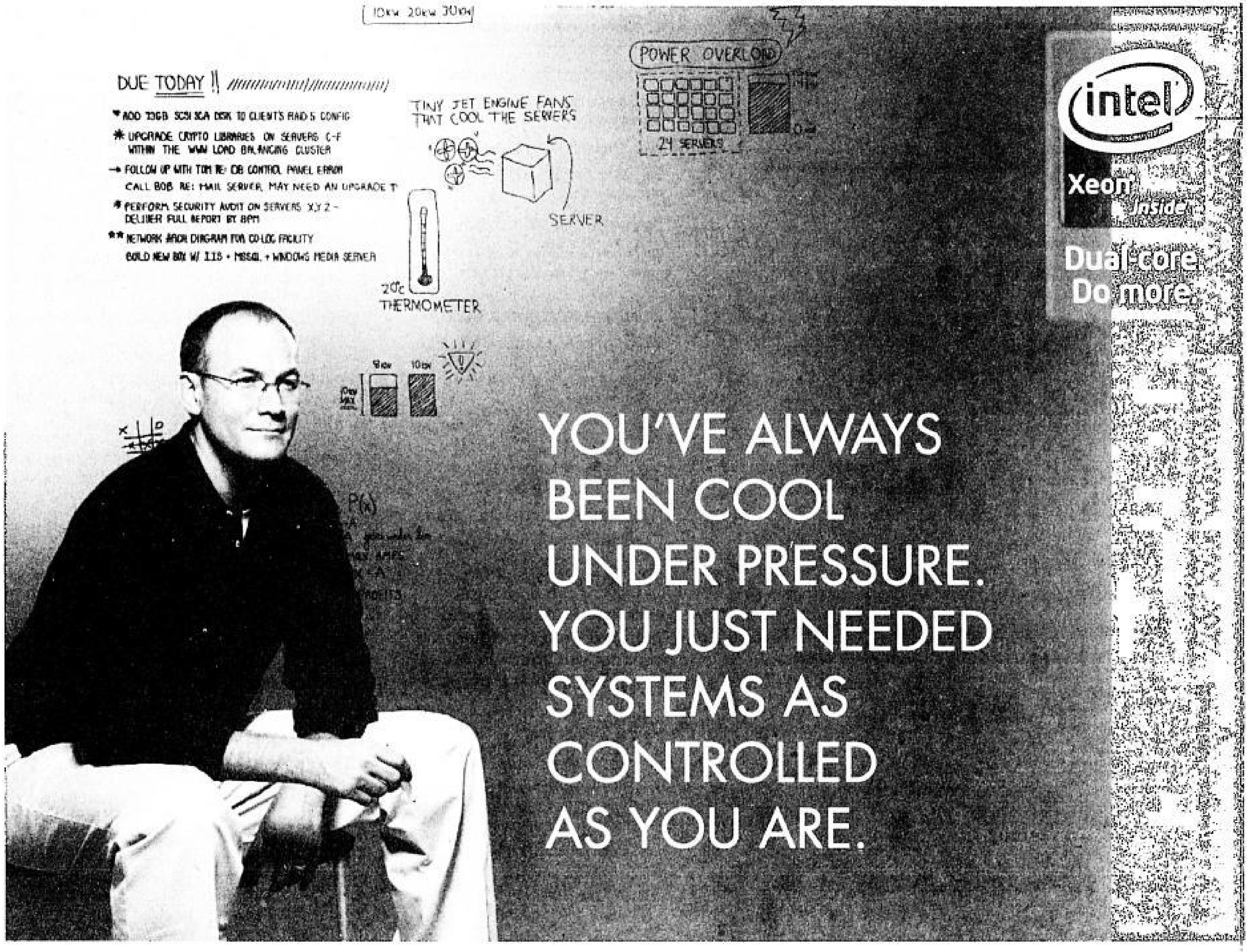
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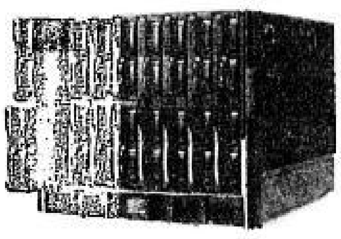
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Landbank plans to borrow $531M in ODAs

ADB, Japan bank and nontraditional sources to be tapped

By Doris C. Dumlao

STATE-OWNED LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPpines plans to tap $531 million worth of official development assistance from global donors to expand its source of funding this year and in 2008, bank officials said.

With local interest rates falling to historic lows, Landbank president Gilda Pico said the bank would also build up its domestic deposit base to lower its cost of funds.

To secure ODAs, Pico said borrowers like Landbank were required to set aside 4 percent of the proceeds of the loan for foreign exchange cover. They are also required to pay 1 percent in guarantee fee to the national government.

"This cost, equivalent to 5 percent of the loan, is heavy, considering that you still have to pay the interest," Pico said.

Despite this, she said, Landbank had planned to avail itself of various ODA funds with maturities of 20-40 years. These ODAs, she added, were matched with various development projects.

Lucila Tesorero, Landbank assistant vice president at Landbank, said the following three projects were lined up for funding by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation: $150 million for agriculture enterprise development; $150 million for support to water, energy and environment projects, and $103 million for the local government unit credit support program.

The first is already in the advanced stage of negotiations and has been endorsed by the national government for inclusion in the 27th yen loan package. The JBIC loan will mature in up to 30 years.

"We are also working with the Asian Development Bank for credit support for water, energy and environment-related projects worth $100 million," she said.

Also in the pipeline is a 7-million-euro community-based mangrove and forest management project with German development lender KfW.

Also being worked out with KfW is a 15-million-euro LGU investment program which is expected to be closed within the year.

"We have signed last year a 50-million- euro LGU investment program with KFW and this is fully committed," Tesorero said.

The KfW loans will carry a maturity of up to 40 years.

Tesorero said Landbank had likewise started talking with nontraditional sources of ODA funds such as the China Export Import Bank.

China Eximbank, which is financing the controversial North Railway project, has committed to pour into the country at least $2 in ODA yearly in the next three to four years.

About 68 percent of Landbank's loan portfolio is now devoted to priority sectors, jumping from only 36 percent in 2000. These priority sectors included farmers and fisherfolk, microenterprises and small and medium enterprises, livelihood loans, agribusiness, agri-infrastructure, agri-related projects of government-owned and -controlled corporations and environment-related projects.

In 2006, the bank contributed P37.3 billion to the government's pump-priming via fresh lending to cooperatives, countryside financial institutions, small and medium enterprises and Quedancor.

"Through our financing support for developmental projects particularly those related to agri-processing, agri-infrastructure, housing and agricultural production, we are helping the government strengthen the country's major growth areas by improving productivity and generating job employment," Pico said.

Of the total amount released, the Luzon Urban Beltway got the biggest share at 44.7 percent or P16.7 billion, followed by the Agri-business Mindanao at P9.5 billion. Central Philippines got P6.7 billion and the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle received P4.4 billion.

In terms of project type, agricultural production accounted for the bulk of the loans at P21.9 billion, followed by agri-processing with P10.8 billion. Other projects financed were agriculture—including water, sanitation, solid waste management and housing.

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Pulse Asia up to its old tricks

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

FROM NOW TILL THE MAY 14 ELECTIONS, the Filipino people will be virtually swamped with political opinion surveys from Pulse Asia, Social Weather Station, Ibon Foundation and some other lesser known firms that crawl out of the woodwork during campaign time.

Pulse Asia was ahead of the pack. If the elections had been held last Feb. 8, PA reported in a press release, "14 personalities—7 of whom are officially part of the United Opposition's senatorial slate, 6 may or may not run under the administration's ticket, and 1 will run as an independent opposition candidate—would have a statistical chance of winning a senatorial seat."

PA went on: "Loren Legarda continues to lead the list of probable winners..." In the very next sentence, PA went all the way, "These individuals may be considered as sure winners if elections were held today given that their current statistical rankings range from 1st to 11th places—clearly within the winning circle of 12 senators.

In one short paragraph, "statistical chances" turned into "probable winners" and finally metamorphosed into "sure winners." That is what I call black magic.

And what are the statistics PA brags about? PA calls it "... a multistage probability sample of 1,200 representative adults 18 years old and above." "Face-to-face" interviews were conducted, as follow: 300 in Metro Manila, 300 in the rest of Luzon, 300 in the Visayas and 300 in Mindanao. Then the results per area are added up. PA calls this a nationwide survey.

I have said this more than once before, and I will say it again: 1,200 interviews can never be called nationwide. Even if PA conducted one interview per municipality, 1,200 will not cover even one-half of the 3,500 municipalities.

Also, how can 300 interviews be representative of the 5 million adults in Metro Manila?

Besides, you cannot add the results in Metro Manila, where newspaper readership and TV exposure are its densest and Internet connectivity is at its widest, to those for the rest of the country. In mathematics, there is a saying that the sum of the parts may not necessarily equal the whole.

I agree with the statistical linchpin that you do not have to take a whole bowlful to find out how a soup tastes. A teaspoonful would be more than enough. But PA's statistics are so small, nay, minuscule, to be absolutely meaningless.

Along with the survey results, PA should list the questions asked of the respondents. The reader need not have to write in a request for details.

PA claims that the surveys were undertaken "on its own without any party singularly commissioning the research effort." If you believer that, you will believe anything.

My good friend, Mansing Sarmiento, head of Vox Populi, a research and survey firm, tells me that a survey such as the one undertaken by PA would cost at least half a million pesos. Where did PA get the money? Surely, not from subscription fees. Why should anybody subscribe to PA and pay fees when survey results are released to the press for everyone to read and the details are furnished at request from any non-subscriber?

Finally, has Pulse Asia paid value added tax on its income? Revenue Commissioner Buñag should send his eagle-eyed auditors to look into the books of Pulse Asia. And while they are at it, why not also look into the books of Social Weather Station and Ibon Foundation? I cannot wait to read the audit report.

BOC to retire preferred shares

BANK OF COMMERCE IS PLANNING TO retire 400 million in outstanding preferred shares and increase loan loss provisioning to prepare for more challenging times in the next three years.

BOC president Raul de Mesa said the bank was expecting to realize a net profit of P2.2 billion over a three-year period starting this year, after yielding P596 million in net earnings in 2006 against only P160 million in the previous year.

"On our capital, what we intend to do is to implement a conscious program to retire some of our outstanding preferred shares," De Mesa said.

He said portion of the bank's earnings in the years ahead would go to two things: Provisioning and retirement of preferred shares. The bank has seven series of outstanding preferred shares in various maturities.

Preferred shares give holders the first crack at the payment of dividends but they do not carry any voting right. They are usually convertible into common shares.

In BOC's case, its preferred shares are convertible but the bank plans to retire them instead of converting them into common shares.

"It's to our advantage that we just retire them so there will be no dilution," De Mesa said.

He said the bank's efforts to raise core or tier 1 capital in the future would depend on what would be needed.

"With a CAR (capital adequacy ratio) of 12 percent we should be okay, unless we see a dramatic surge in how our people are able to increase risk assets," De Mesa said.

For this year, he said the bank's biggest challenge would be how it would use low-earning assets, which account for about half of its resources amounting to P40 billion.

"The challenge is to help the economy grow by convincing the borrowers to borrow," he said.

In 2006, the bank's fee-based revenues rose by P447 million or 46 percent buoyed by the sale of investments and trading gains on peso securities, while operating expenses were higher by P235 million or 11 percent than year-ago level.

"While margins were under pressure due to fierce competition, the institution turned in a solid performance powered by excellent investment and trading results in our treasury operations, robust deposit growth and remarkable cost management," De Mesa said.

Doris C. Dumlao

NOTICE AND AGENDA OF THE MEETING

aboitiz
Equity Ventures

ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES, INC.
Aboitiz Corporate Center,
Gov. Manuel A. Cuenco Avenue
Kasambagan, Cebu City 6000, Philippines

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

NOTICE is hereby given that the Special Meeting of Stockholders of **ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES, INC.**, will be held on February 27, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Audio Visual Room of the Aboitiz Corporate Center, Gov. Manuel Cuenco Avenue, Kasambagan, Cebu City.

The Agenda of the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Proof of Notice of Meeting
3. Determination of Quorum
4. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Stockholders' Meeting of May 15, 2006.
5. Presentation on the planned initial public offering of Aboitiz Power Corporation (APC).
6. Approval and Ratification of the proposed transfer of AEV's investments in power companies to APC.
7. Other Business
8. Adjournment

Only stockholders of record at the close of business on January 31, 2007 are entitled to notice and to vote at this meeting. Registration will start at 2:00 p.m. and will end at 4:00 p.m. Kindly present any proof of identification, such as driver's license, passport, company I.D. or SSS/GSIS I.D. Aside from personal identification, representatives of corporate stockholders and other entities should also present a duly sworn Secretary's Certificate or a similar document showing his or her authority to represent the corporation or entity.

Should you be unable to attend the meeting, you may want to execute a proxy in favor of a representative. In accordance with the amended By-Laws of the Corporation, proxies must be presented to the Secretary for inspection, validation and record at least seven (7) days prior to the opening of the stockholders' meeting. We enclose a proxy form for your convenience.

For the Board of Directors.

(sgd) M. JASMINE S. OPORTO
Corporate Secretary

Seaweed sector sees 20% sales growth

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINE SEAWEED INDUSTRY EXpects a 20-percent increase in sales this year to about $190 million in the global market with the wider usage for the agriculture-based product for food and industrial manufacturing applications, an industry official said.

Cebu-based firms exporting processed and semi-processed seaweeds that produce the by-product carrageenan will continue to increase gross sales, which last year rose to $165 million from $150 million the year before, Seaweeds Industry Association of the Philippines (SIAP) president Benson Dakay said in an interview.

"Carrageenan's extensive use as a safe food additive and pharmaceutical and hygiene products' base will continue to generate new sales for the industry," said Dakay, who owns Shemberg Manufacturing Corp.

Carrageenan has been used worldwide as food additive for ham processing and dairy product manufacturing and as an industrial product ingredient for pharmaceutical soft gel medicine coating and for hygiene products' base for toothpaste, he noted.

Growing demand from abroad, however, could not be met by local seaweed farms in the last two years. Dakay said that since 2005, the industry has chosen to acquire raw seaweeds from other Southeast Asian countries to meet its requirements, which this year are estimated at 160,000 metric tons.

He said that the $300-million industry is reeling from the insufficient supply of seaweeds as farms in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu have not fully recovered since the typhoons destroyed them in the last quarter of 2006.

"Seaweed farmers need better access to financing to continue and rehabilitate their farms and for more farmers to take up seaweed farming," he said.

The insufficient supply has jacked up the price of local raw high-grade seaweed to P35-P42 a kilo. Local processors have started importing from Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and as far as Chile at P30 a kilo.

However, industry players only use these imports as minor components and Philippine-made seaweeds still constitute 70 percent of the end product due to high grade quality.

But like other exporters, the strengthening of the peso meant lower profits even as they cope with higher production costs and insufficient supply of raw materials.

Supplying more than 70 percent of the global demand, the Philippines is the world's top exporter of carrageenan to the United States and Europe.

Malaysian ...

From page B1

Inc., Limketkai Manufacturing Co., Enerfuse (composed of new oil players Flying V, Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc., Seaoil Philippines Inc. and Eastern Petroleum Corp.), Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Petron Corp. are also considering biodiesel projects.

He said National Biofuels was looking at two 200,000-metric ton (MT) refineries, HDZ, two refineries, PetroleumBrunei, one biodiesel plant, Chemrez, one refinery on its own and one in partnership with PNOC-AFC, and Limketkai, one 100,000-MT plant.

Limketkai, an edible oil producer, was actually considering giving up its current business to shift to producing biodiesel from jatropha, he said.

PNOC-AFC had already signed a memorandum of understanding with Samsung for an P8.2-billion jatropha plantation and refinery project. It also disclosed that Sumitomo had agreed to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a biofuels central terminal in Bataan.

Gov't ...

From page B3

as a collateral for the principal debt.

Over time, the value of such collateral has gone up as the downtrend in interest rates resulted in capital appreciation.

"The zeros (zero coupon bonds) we bought before, if we reprice now and use it for refinancing, that's additional money to either retire or buy more zeros to (convert) our short-term debts into long-term," Yap said.

As part of the NFA's deficit-reduction program, Yap said some of the warehouses located in commercial hubs could be privatized.

"What I'm telling NFA also, is not only to look at rice distribution as its end-all be-all. They have 300 warehouses that should be turned into logistics hub for storage but before we could do that, we should create a situation of abundance, increased production and these we can't do without linkage," Yap said.

"So I want to bust the domestic and international market, create markets and then pump more money for production support," he said.

Other ways to trim the NFA's deficit would be to rationalize its workforce and diversify its income stream, Yap said.

"This means not just sticking to trading or importation then distribution to the markets," Yap said.

On FTI, he said the sheer size of the complex was making it difficult for the government to unlock values from this asset.

"There's a lot of long-term leases and this is a disincentive unless there's a buyer who can invest there for the long term. So that's what we're looking for, an institutional player who can come in, one who can afford to wait, one who can leverage its cash flow, who knows how to parlay (the vast property) into its advantage," Yap said.

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RSDL VACANT LOT
VISTA VERDE North Ph-3
Kaybiga, CALOOCAN
(Near Vista Verde North)

Lot Area	Min Bid Price
144sqm	P 392,000
156sqm	P 425,000
316sqm	P 860,000
329sqm	P 923,000
249sqm	P 2,550,000

SPR_MNL442 RSDL CONDO
GOTESCO REGENCY Twin Towers
Concepcion St. Manila
(Near SM Manila)

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
194.60sqm	P 6,624,000
196.58sqm	P 6,684,000
197.28sqm	P 6,708,000
369.18sqm	P 12,553,000
372.78sqm	P 12,675,000
373.38sqm	P 12,695,000

SPR_NE149 RSDL VACANT LOT
MAHARLIKA ROAD
Bagong Silang, Talavera,
Nueva Ecija (within City Proper)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
232sqm	P 33,000
416sqm	P 59,000
9,061sqm	P 1,266,000
9,980sqm	P 1,394,000
9,981sqm	P 1,394,000

SPR_TGY226 RSDL VACANT LOT
RODEO HILLS SUBD.
Brgy. Matabac Alfonso,
Tagaytay (Near Splindido)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
350sqm	P 638,000
450sqm	P 765,000
1,143sqm	P 972,000
1,298sqm	P 1,104,000

RSDL VACANT LOTS
Brgy. Malhacan, Meycauyan
(Near Meycauayan Exit-NLEX)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
223sqm	P 474,000
469sqm	P 997,000
500sqm	P 255,000
1,139sqm	P 2,421,00

SPR_RZL346 FARM LAND
MOTHER'S FARM
Bagong Bayan, San Isidro,
Pililla

Lot Area	Min Bid Price
5,582sqm	P 1,898,000
5,834sqm	P 1,984,000
11,429sqm.	P 3,886,000

SPR_QCB490 RSDL CONDO UNITS
MINDANAO AVE
Brgy. Bago Balay, Quezon City
(Near Congressional Ave)

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
236.84sqm	P 5,389,000
236.84sqm	P 6,295,000
189.53sqm	P 6,700,000

SPR_QCB528 RSDL VACANT LOT
Palanan, Capitol Dist., QC

Lot Area	Min Bid Price
5,000sqm	P 3,323,000
5,586sqm	P 3,712,000
5,577sqm	P 3,706,000
5,600sqm	P 3,721,000

SPR_CVT304 RSDL VACANT LOT
MIRA HILLS SUBD.,
Puerto Azul, Ternate, Cavite
(within Puerto Azul)

Lot Area	Min Bid Price
1,178sqm	P 5,007,000
1,200sqm	P 5,100,000
1,332sqm	P 5,661,000
1,457sqm	P 6,193,000

SPR_TGY279 RSDL VACANT LOT
TAGAYTAY WOODSBORROUGH
Brgy. Guinhawa

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
180sqm	P 459,000
200sqm	P 510,000
260sqm	P 663,000
312sqm	P 796,000

SPR_TAR201 RSDL VACANT LOT
SAN JUAN DE MATA AND
STO. NIÑO
(Near Romulo Highway)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
120sqm	P 189,000
123sqm	P 194,000
150sqm	P 236,000
304sqm	P 517,000

METRO MANILA

ANTIPOLO, RIZAL

SPR_RZL320 HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 248sqm (near Cypress Subd.)
Monsville Ext. VISTA VERDE
Min. Bid Price: P 738,000

SPR_RZL321 HOUSE & LOT
LA. 176sqm FA 36sqm (near Loreland)
Diamond St. PINES CITY ROYAL SUBD.
Min. Bid Price: P 587,000

CAINTA, RIZAL

SPR_RZL331 3-STRY HSE & LOT
LA. 300sqm. FA 320.4sqm (Near Sta. Lucia)
Vitora St. VISTA VERDE EXEC. VILL.
Min. Bid Price: P 2,134,000

SPR_RZL332 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA1,096sqm.(Near Meralco)
BROOKSIDE HILLS SUBD. San Juan
Min. Bid Price: P 2,399,000

SPR_RZL333 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA. 238sqm (Near Golf Course)
VALLEY VIEW EXEC. SUBD. Valley Golf
Min. Bid Price: P 709,000

SPR_RZL334 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA.173sqm FA190sqm.
(near Roosevelt College)
GOLDEN MILE SUBD. Balara
Min. Bid Price: P 1,256,000

SPR_RZL335 RSDL VACANT LOT
BIRMINGHAM PLACE
Brookside Hills (near Meralco)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
162sqm	P 482,000
166sqm	P 494,000

SPR_RZL336 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 278sqm. (Near Filinvest Subd)
EASTVILLE SUBD., Filinvest East
Min. Bid Price: P 1,084,000

SPR_RZL337 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA 200sqm. FA 384sqm (near Sta. Lucia)
Choonthia St. VISTA VERDE
Min. Bid Price: P 2,740,000

CALOOCAN

SPR_CAL361 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 150sqm
(near Ma. Auxiliadores Church)
Arapolo St. cor. Pasig St., MAYPAJO
Min Bid Price: P 3,570,000

SPR_CAL363 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 3,401sqm
TIERRA NOVA ROYAL, Bagumbong
(Near Ma. Theresa Avila School)
Min Bid Price: P 7,138,000

SPR_CAL366 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 509sqm FA. sqm
Glascon St. cor. Munich St.
VISTA VERDE (Near Vista Verde North)
Min Bid Price: P 5,354,000

SPR_CAL367 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA 1,000sqm FA. sqm (Near LTO)
J. BAUTISTA Ave. Bamo Calaanan.
Min Bid Price: P 11,900,000

SPR_CAL371 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 240sqm (Near Brgy. Hall)
Guijo St. SILANGAN SUBD. Deparo.
Min Bid Price: P 572,000

SPR_CAL372 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 1,279sqm
F. Llano St. DAMONG MALIIT
Novaliches (near Ina ng Bayan Church)
Min Bid Price: P 2,175,000

SPR_CAL373 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 249sqm F.A 320sqm (Near City Hall)
Golden Clarion St. LILLES VILLE
Subd. Ph2, Camarin
Min Bid Price: P 2,550,000

SPR_CAL410 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 197sqm (Near Vista Verde North)
Munich St. VISTA VERDE EXEC
VILL, Kaybiga.
Min Bid Price: P 567,000

GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN

SPR_ SJ535 RSDL CONDO UNIT
F.A 72.65sqm
PLATINUM 2000, Annapolis Greenhills
Min Bid Price: P 2,779,000

LAS PIÑAS

SPR_LSP413 RSDL LOTS
L.A 169sqm (Near SM- Sucat)
QUIRINO Ave cor. C-5 Rd Ext,
Pulang Lupa 1
Min Bid Price: P 26,151,000

SPR_LSP414 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 350sqm F.A 247.56sqm
(Near Macro)
Tropical Ave. BF HOMES INT'L
Min Bid Price: P3,618,000

SPR_LSP415 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 236sqm F.A 175sqm
(Near SM Sucat)
Rosal St. GACHALIAN VILL, Ph 7-A
Min Bid Price: P 910,000

SPR_LSP416 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 192sqm (Near Makro)
Recio Garcia St., BF RESORT
VILL, Pamplona.
Min Bid Price: P1,280,000

SPR_LSP417 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 260sqm F.A 250sqm
(Near SM Sucat)
Camia cor. Villanueva St.
GATCHALIAN SUBD. Ph-VII.
Min Bid Price: P 1,726,000

SPR_LSP418 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 497sqm F.A 385sqm
Lozada St., GATCHALIAN SUBD.
Manuyo (Near SM Sucat)
Min Bid Price: P3,044,000

SPR_LSP419 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 582sqm (Near Makro)
Ines Manapol cor. Guada Sanchez
BF RESORT VILL.
Min Bid Price: P5,343,000

SPR_LSP420 4STRY COMML BLDG
L.A 136sqm F.A 399.71sqm
Real St. (Alabang Zapote Rd)
Pamplona
Min Bid Price: P5,014,000

MAKATI

SPR_MKT421 OFFICE CONDO
F.A 148sqm
VERNIDA I CONDO, Amorsolo St.
Min Bid Price: P 5,661,000

SPR_MKT422 RSDL CONDO
F.A 35.60sqm
SOUTH STAR PLAZA,
South Super Hi-way
Min Bid Price: P 756,000

SPR_MKT431 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 240sqm F.A 352sqm
Mayapis St. SAN ANTONIO VILL.
Min Bid Price: P 4,981,000

SPR_MKT438 RSDL CONDO
F.A 93sqm w/ PARKING SLOT
Colonade, LEGASPI VILL
(near greenbelt)
Min Bid Price: P 4,348,000

SPR_MKT428 RSDL CONDO
F.A 107sqm
THE PEAK CONDO, Alfaro cor
Herrera Sts.
Min Bid Price: P 5,912,000

SPR_MKT429 OFFICE CONDO
BURGUNDY CONDO
Makati, Gil Puyat.

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
45.30sqm	P 3,193,000
66.30sqm	P 4,679,000

SPR_MKT433 RSDL CONDO
F.A 233sqm w/ PARKING SLOT
LPL MANOR, 116 Alfaro St.
SALCEDO VILL.
Min Bid Price: P 12,280,000

SPR_MKT434 RSDL CONDO
PALACE OF MAKATI, P Burgos St.

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
32.60sqm	P 1,526,000
66sqm	P 3,087,000

SPR_MKT436 RSDL CONDO
F.A 150sqm w/ PARKING SLOT
LPL Manor, 116 Alfaro St.
SALCEDO VILL.
Min Bid Price: P 7,905,000

SPR_MKT437 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 295sqm F.A 260sqm
Suez St. Sta. Cruz, near
METROPOLITAN Ave.
Min Bid Price: P 7,717,000

SPR_MKT439 RSDL CONDO
FA. 30sqm
T-TOWER CONDO, P. Burgos cor.
Calderon St.
Min Bid Price P 969,000

MANILA

SPR_MNL450 LOT W/ IMPVT
L.A 188sqm F.A 334sqm
Dapitan St. SAMPALOC
Min Bid Price. P 6,950,000

SPR_MNL457 3-STRY RSDL BLDG
L.A 86sqm F.A 259sqm
DAGUPAN St. Ext. Tondo
Min Bid Price: P 1,372,000

SPR_MNL481 RSDL W/ IMPRVMT
L.A 83.64sqm F.A 183.20sqm
Quirino St. Tondo, Manila
Min Bid Price: P 719,000

MARIKINA

SPR_MRK465 VACANT LOT
L.A 420sqm (Near Blueridge Subd.)
Aguinaldo St. INDUSTRIAL VALLEY
Min Bid Price: P 3,927,000

SPR_MRK467 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 120sqm F.A 65sqm
(Near Jollibee)
LA JOTA VILLA 1, Gen. Ordonez
St., Concepcion Uno
Min Bid Price: P 892,000

SPR_MRK468 VACANT LOT
L.A 248sqm (Near China Bank)
J.P RIZAL St. San Roque.
Min Bid Price: 2,108,000

SPR_MRK469 TOWN HOUSE
L.A 420sqm F.A 297sqm
(near blueridge subd.)
Aguinaldo St. INDUSTRIAL VALLEY
Min Bid Price: P 4,705,000

MUNTINLUPA

SPR_MUN470 3-STRY HSE & LOT
w/ swimming pool
LA 602sqm. F.A 447.80sqm
(near Ayala Alabang Comml Area)
Toledo St., ALABANG HILLS
SUBD. Alabang
Min Bid Price: P 7,404,000

SPR_MUN471 1-STRY RSDL
BLDG w/ BASEMENT
L.A 1,221sqm F.A 1,092sqm
Regent St. and Peninsula St.
PLEASANT VILLAGE (near City
Hall & Alabang Business Area)
Min Bid Price. P 7,605,000

PARAÑAQUE

SPR_PRQ474 TOWN HOUSE
WESTMONT VILLAGE,
Dr. A. Santos Ave. (Near City Hall)

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
62.25sqm	P 1,408,000
116.75sqm	P 2,260,000

SPR_PRQ476 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 291sqm
Bignay St. MON EL SUBD.
San Dionisio (Near Tahanan Village)
Min Bid Price: P 1,114,000

PASAY

SPR_PSY477 4STRY RSDL BLDG
L.A 674sqm F.A 245sqm
P. ZAMORA St. (Near MRT Station)
Min Bid Price: P 8,413,000

PASIG

SPR_PSG478 RSDL CONDO UNIT
ONE MAGNIFICENT MILE
CONDO. San Miguel Ave.
(Near Mega Mall & EDSA Shangrila Mall)

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
86.72sqm	P 3,686,000
106.50sqm	P 4,530,000

QUEZON CITY

SPR_QCL482 2STRY RSDL BLDG
L.A 1,643sqm
(Near Broadway Centrum)
AURORA BLVD. cor. Madison St.
Min Bid Price: P 48,680,000

SPR_QCB483 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 176sqm (Near FEU Hospital)
Riverdale St. GREENVIEW EXEC VILL
Min Bid Price: P 833,000

SPR_QCB484 RSDL CONDO UNIT
F.A 38.80sqm
XAVIERVILLE ROYALE CONDO,
Loyola Hts. (Near Ateneo & Katipunan)
Min Bid Price: P 1,320,000

SPR_QCB485 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 180sqm F.A. 328sqm
(Near UP Diliman)
Ignacio Ave, NORTH SUSANA
EXEC VILL. Old Balara.
Min Bid Price: P 3,672,000

SPR_QCB487 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 621sqm (Near EVER GOTESCO)
Victorino Salazar St.
Brgy. Holy Spirit, BF Homes
Min Bid Price: P 4,751,000

SPR_QCB488 WAREHOUSE BLDG
L.A 1,497sqm (Near Vilita Village)
Quirino Highway, Brgy. Talipapa
Novaliches
Min Bid Price: P 19,087,000

SPR_QCB489 2STRY RSDL BLDG
L.A 240sqm F.A 472.30sqm
Celosia St. DEL NACIA VILLE 4,
Sauyo (Near Sauyo Road)
Min Bid Price: P 2,567,000

SPR_QCL495 RSDL CONDO UNITS
F.A. 45 sqm. (2 Units Available)
PRINCE GREGORY CONDO,
12th Ave. Cubao.
(Near ALI Mall, SM & Gateway)
Min Bid Price: P 1,722,000

SPR_QCB499 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A. 400sqm F.A 135.5sqm
Osmena St. T. S. CRUZ SUBD.
Novaliches (Near Gen. Luis)
Min Bid Price: P 1,305,000

SPR_ QCL501 6STRY BLDG
L.A. 300sqm F.A 1,177.25sqm
CATOLOS St. Cubao
(near Magsaysay Schl)
Min Bid Price: P 20,162,000

SPR_QCB502 RSDL LOT
L.A. 964sqm (near E. Rodriguez)
No. 49 Int. TOMAS MORATO Ave.
Min Bid Price: P 18,211,000

SPR_QCB503 6-STRY CONDO BLDG
L.A. 1,241sqm FA. 4,480sqm
HOSLA Condominium I,
Tomas Morato (Near E. Rodriguez)
Min Bid Price: P 64,303,000

SPR_QCL504 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A. 300sqm F.A 214sqm
MIAMI St., Cubao (Near Gateway Mall)
Min Bid Price: P 8,338,000

SPR_QCL505 RSDL W/ IMPRVMNT
L.A 532sqm (Near GATEWAY & SM)
13th Ave., Cubao
Min Bid Price: P 8,885,000

SPR_QCB510 RSDL CONDO UNIT
WEST MANSION Hotel Zamboanga St.
(Near Visayas Ave & Quezon Ave)

Floor Area	Min Bid Price
12.50sqm(parking)	P 170,000
37.76sqm	P 1,284,000
55.97sqm	P 2,141,000

SPR_QCB517 2-STRY HSE & LOT
L.A 240sqm F.A 216.5sqm w/
ROOFDECK
Gns St. VILLA VERDE HOMES,
(Near SM Fairview)
Min Bid Price: P 2,363,000

SPR_QCL524 RSDL CONDO UNIT
F.A 80sqm (Near SM & ALI Mall)
UNION SQUARE ONE CONDO,
15th Ave.
Min Bid Price: P 2,040,000

SPR_QCB525 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 450sqm F.A 225sqm
Wayan St., MASAMBONG
(Near Sienna College)
Min Bid Price: P 6,057,000

SPR_ QCL533 RSDL HSE & LOT
L.A 489sqm F.A 221sqm (Near SM)
West Point St., Cubao
Min Bid Price: P 7,113,000

SPR_ QCB534 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 460sqm F.A 184sqm
Riverdale St. Saint Ignatius Village
Min Bid Price: P 6,585,000

TAGUIG

SPR_ TAG537 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 3,999sqm (Near City Hall)
Jones Ext., Pawang, Wawa, Taguig
Min Bid Price: P 3,044,000

SPR_ TAG538 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 240sqm
(Near Fisher Valley College)
Nightingale Bend, Bay Breeze Wawa
Min Bid Price: P 612,000

TAYTAY, RIZAL

SPR_RZL339 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 249sqm.
(Near Home Sweet Home Grocery)
Diamond St. PALMERA HOMES II
Min. Bid Price: P 572,000

SPR_RZL340 HOUSE & LOT w/
WHOUSE
LA 454sqm. (Near Coca-cola Plant)
Macopa St. DIVIDEND HOMES
Min. Bid Price: P 1,314,000

VALENZUELA

SPR_ VAL540 4 RSDL VACANT LOTS
L.A 1,277.50sqm
(Near Sapang San Roque)
M. HERNANDEZ St. Mabolo
Min Bid Price: P 11,890,000

SPR_ VAL545 WAREHOUSE
L.A 1,234sqm FA 1,340sqm
(Near Regina Cycle Center)
KOWLOON COMPD, Bo. Ugong,
Mapulang Lupa
Min Bid Price: P 6,428,000

LUZON

BAGUIO

TEXT 09185328111

SPR_BAG001 RSDL CONDO UNIT
FA.177.16sqm. (Near Burnham Park)
BAGUIO CLASSICS CONDO,
Green Valley Subd.
Min. Bid Price: P 3,765,000

BATAAN

09195649933

SPR_BTN072 AGRILOT
LA. 72,684sqm.
Bo. Alangan Roman Super
Highway Limay (Villa Haveland)
Min. Bid Price: P 27,671,000

BATANGAS

TEXT 09175443063

SPR_BAT218 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA.171sqm (Near SM Batangas)
VERGARA ST., Batangas City
Min. Bid Price: P 509,000

SPR_BAT655 LOFTY WAREHOUSE
LA 846sqm
(Near Padre Garcia Market).
Brgy. Pansol, PADRE GARCIA
Min. Bid Price: P 1,910,000

SPR_BAT219 STRY HOUSE & LOT
LA 128.5sqm. FA 90sqm
(Near Basilica Immaculada Church)
Int. Caido St., POBLACION
Min. Bid Price: P 949,000

SPR_BAT220 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA 117sqm. FA 84sqm.
Maselang St., POBLACION
Min. Bid Price: P 909,000

SPR_BAT221 RAWLAND
LA. 15,000sqm
Brgy. Neogan. TAGAYTAY RIDGE
Laurel (Overlooking Taal Lake)
Min. Bid Price: P 15,173,000

SPR_BAT222 AGRILOT
LA 4,667sqm
(Near SM Lipa and Robinson)
Brgy. BALINTAWAK, Lipa
Min. Bid Price: P 7,934,000

SPR_BAT223 RSDL VACANT LOT
MASAGANA SUBD., Tambo Lipa
(Near La Salle & Robinson)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
195sqm	P 498,000
842sqm	P 1,432,000

(2 lots available)

CAVITE

SPR_CVT257 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 368sqm (Near Southmall & ATC)
AYALA SOUTHVALE, MOLINO
Min. Bid Price: P 4,223,000

SPR_CVT258 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 1,198sqm (Golf Resort Village).
SOUTHWOODS, Kabilang Baybay,
Carmona
Min. Bid Price: P 8,656,000

SPR_CVT260 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 21,191sqm. (Near SM &
Robinson- Dasma)
CITIVIEW FARMS, Paliparan,
Dasma
Min. Bid Price: P 7,344,000

SPR_CVT261 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 657sqm.
THE ORCHARD SUBD.
Salitran, Dasmariñas
Min. Bid Price: P 2,960,000

SPR_CVT262HOUSE & LOT
LA 98sqm. FA 67.2sqm.
TANGUILE WOODSTATE VILL.
Dasmariñas (near Town Proper)
Min. Bid Price: P 524,000

SPR_CVT264 TOWN HOUSE
LA. 126sqm. FA. 163sqm.
(Near Golf & Country Club Village)
MANILA ORCHARD TOWNHOMES
Salitran, Dasmarinas
Min. Bid Price; P 1,701,000

SPR_CVT269 RSDL W/ IMPRVT
LA 218sqm. FA 523.44sqm.
Burol, Dasmariñas
Min. Bid Price: P 2,726,000

SPR_CVT270 HOUSE & LOT
LA 80sqm. FA 80sqm.
Tel Aviv St. SUMMERWIND SUBD.
Dasmarinas (Near Dela Salle
Dasmariñas)
Min. Bid Price: P 293,000

SPR_CVT272 HOUSE & LOT
LA 198sqm. FA.111.9sqm.
(Near Robinson Dasma)
San Juan St. Gen. Trias
Min. Bid Price: P 1,093,000

SPR_CVT273 RSDL VACANT LOT
PALLAS ATHES EXEC.
Bgy. Anabu, Imus, Cavite
(Near Dasma Town Proper)

Lot Area	Min Bid Price
150sqm	P 383,000
300sqm	P 765,000
647sqm	P 1,650,000

BULACAN

SPR_BUL078 2-RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 689sqm
BALAGTAS, Bulacan
Min Bid Price: P 1,582,000

SPR_BUL080 RESORT AREA
LA. 33,337sqm.
Villa Evangelista, Bagumbayan,
Bulacan (near Municipal Hall)
Min. Bid Price: P 35,845,000

LAOAG, ILOCOS

SPR_ILN005 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA. 47,835sqm.
BO. MANG-NGATO, Cabungan North
Min. Bid Price: P 11,114,000

LAGUNA

SPR_LGN311 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 409sqm
(Near San Jose Polymedic).
Mayapa, CALAMBA
Min. Bid Price: P 1,739,000

SPR_LGN314 HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 300sqm. FA 600sqm.
Yakal St., DONA EUSEBIA SUBD.
Concepcion, San Pablo City
Min. Bid Price: P 4,125,000

NUEVA ECIJA

SPR_NE094 RSDL LOT w/ WRHSE
LA. 240sqm. FA 160sqm
KAPITAN PEPE Subd.,Cabanatuan
Min. Bid Price: P 612,000

SPR_NE095 RSDL LOT w/ WRHSE
LA. 240sqm. FA 100sqm
KAPITAN PEPE Subd.,Cabanatuan
Min. Bid Price: P 612,000

SPR_NE096 2STRY HOUSE & LOT
LA 1,000sqm. FA 443sqm.
MAHARLIKA HIGHWAY, Cabanatuan
Min. Bid Price: P 9,634,000

SPR_NE101 COMML VACANT LOT
LA 305sqm (near Antonio's Mall)
Brgy. Bernardo, Cabanatuan
Min. Bid Price: P 2,074,000

SPR_NE103 2 RSDL VACANT LOTS
L.A. 400 sqm.
Bo. Valdefuente, Cabanatuan City
(Near Youngs Clinic)
Min. Bid Price P 1,292,000

SPR_NE122 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 184sqm.(Within Old Muñoz)
Poblacion, Muñoz
Min. Bid Price: P 1,408,000

SPR_NE123 RSDL VACANT LOT
Bo. Magaya, Muñoz (Near Phil. Rice)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
12,964sqm	P 1,102,000
14,768sqm	P 1,256,000
30,527sqm	P 2,595,000

SPR_NE126 AGRILOT
LA 62,028sqm.
Bantug, Muñoz
Min. Bid Price: P 2,109,000

SPR_NE132 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA 500sqm. FA.145.10sqm
(Near Fire Station)
CARDENAS St. Poblacion, San Jose
Min. Bid Price: P 3,678,000

SPR_NE133 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 941sqm (Near Health Center)
EUGENIO St. Poblacion, San Jose
Min. Bid Price: P 3,774,000

SPR_NE134 HOUSE & LOT
LA 150sqm. FA 125sqm
(Within City Proper)
PANAHON St. Calaocan, San Jose
Min. Bid Price: P 757,000

SPR_NE138 4STRY COMML BLDG
LA 178sqm. FA580sqm
(Within City Proper).
ELSA TOWER, Poblacion, San Jose
Min. Bid Price: P 6,477,000

SPR_NE145 - RSDL w/ IMPRVT
LA 222sqm. FA. 63sqm
(Near Nat'l Road)
Bo. SAN RICARDO, Talavera
Min. Bid Price: P 201,000

SPR_NE155 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 4,319sqm (Near Provincial Rd)
Bo. of San Pascual, Talavera
Min. Bid Price: P 3,304,000

PANGASINAN

TEXT 09154348252

SPR_PSN055 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA. 250sqm. FA.339.01sqm
Alley, BRGY. TAPUAC Dagupan
Min. Bid Price: P 820,000

SPR_PSN061 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 32,906sqm.
(Near Mangatarem Elem Schl)
Bo. Bueno, MANGATAREM
Min. Bid Price: P 979,000

SPR_PSN062 VACANT LOT
LA. 3,057sqm. (Near Barangay Hall)
Bo. Torres, MAPANDAN
Min. Bid Price: P 520,000

SPR_PSN065 VACANT LOT
LA 3,686sqm. (Near Tulao Bridge)
F. Villanueva, STA. BARBARA
Min. Bid Price: P 1,050,000

PAMPANGA

TEXT 09195649933

SPR_PAM165 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 32,686sqm (Front of SG Farm)
San Isidro Rd. Bo. San Pedro,
SAN SIMON
Min. Bid Price: P 6,947,000

SPR_PAM169 RSDL w/ IMPRVMNT
LA. 500sqm FA 117.5sqm.
STO. TOMAS (Near Petron)
Min. Bid Price: P 408,000

SPR_PAM170 COMML BLDG
LA 4,280sqm.
Bo. Dalaquitan, SAN MATIAS
Sto. Tomas
Min. Bid Price: P 13,515,000

QUEZON PROVINCE

TEXT 09209222495

SPR_QP352 SUBDIVISION LOT
L.A. 12,031sqm.
National Hi-way, Masin Sur,
CANDELARIA (Near Town Proper)
Min. Bid Price: P 19,188,00

SPR_QP354 VACANT LOT
PUERTO DEL MAR SUBD.
Ilayang Sabang, Lucena
(Near DFA Office)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
204sqm	P 434,000
221sqm	P 470,000
2000sqm	P 590,000
5000sqm	P 850,000

SPR_QP356 2-STRY HSE & LOT
LA.232sqm. FA. 167.8sqm
(Near DFA Office)
BETTER LIVING SUBD., Lucena City
Min. Bid Price: P 1,537,000

TAGAYTAY

SPR_TGY278 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 8,059sqm (Overlooking Taal)
LIGAYA DRIVE Brgy. Sungay
Min. Bid Price: P 17,126,000

SPR_TGY297 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 360sqm F.A. 360sqm
(Near Tagaytay City Hall).
PC ENLISTED MEN'S &
City Employee's Village
Min. Bid Price: P 303,000

TARLAC

TEXT 09163086112

SPR_TAR171 HOUSE & LOT
LA. 389sqm. FA 155sqm
Jasmin St., BLOSSOMVILLE SUBD.,
Matatalaib (Near Grandmas Hotel)
Min. Bid Price. P 1,278,000

SPR_TAR174 RSDL w/ IMPRVMNT
LA 267sqm FA 95sqm
Jasmin St. CAPITOL GARDENS
SUBD. San Roque
Min. Bid Price: P 534,000

SPR_TAR176 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A. 4,798 sqm.
Bo. SAPANG MARAGUL
Min Bid Price: 407,000

SPR_TAR 180 RSDL VACANT LOT
Bo. SAN ISIDRO

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price:
642sqm	P 171,000
2,979sqm	P 576,000

SPR_TAR184 HOUSE & LOT
LA 300sqm. FA186sqm
(Near Radio Maria).
SUNRISE SUBD., Maliwalo
Min. Bid Price: P 1,015,000

SPR_TAR185 VACANT LOT
JOEMAC SUBD. San Vicente
(Near Camp Macabulos)

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
900sqm	P 842,000
1,143sqm	P 972,000
1,028sqm	P 1,049,000

SPR_TAR188 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 3,400sqm.
Sitio BANGA-BANGA
Min. Bid Price: P 578,000

SPR_TAR193 HOUSE & LOT
LA 857sqm FA 112sqm.
Sito Matgaya, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price: P 426,000

SPR_TAR196 VACANT LOT
FELOMENA SUBD., San Rafael

Lot Area	Min. Bid Price
150sqm	P 77,000
150sqm	P 102,000
150sqm	P 123,000

SPR_TAR217 RSDL VACANT LOT
LA 373sqm (Beside Banco San Juan)
M. H. Del Pilar St., Bo. STO. CRISTO
Min. Bid Price: P 4,756,000

VISAYAS

ILOILO CITY

TEXT 09206186282

SPR_ILO550 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 68,318sqm
Tagsing, STA. BARBARA
Min Bid Price: P 1,743,000

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

TEXT 09214488869

SPR_NO556 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 405 sqm
GAMBAO SUBD. Talisay City
Min Bid Price: P 310,000

SPR_NO557 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 71,964sqm
BRGY. LOPEZ JAENA, Sagay City
Min Bid Price: 728,000

CEBU CITY

TEXT 09266256957

SPR_CEB558 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 934 sqm
(Near Gaisano Country Mall)
Paseo Angelina, Ph3, MA. LUISA
ESTATE SUBD.
Min Bid Price: P 2,362,000

MINDANAO

BUTUAN

TEXT 09283336161

SPR_BUT562 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 1,837sqm
(Near St. Peter Memorial Chapel)
C.M Recto Langihan,
Min Bid Price: P 1,431,000

COTABATO

TEXT 09157470332

SPR_COT580 VACANT LOT
L.A 471sqm
SINSUAT, Cotabato City
Min Bid Price: P 761,000

DAVAO

TEXT 09219703112

SPR_DAV606 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 1,826sqm F.A 3,800sqm
San Miguel, MATINA.
Min Bid Price: P 14,444,000

SPR_DAV610 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 66,550sqm
Brgy TIBUNGCO
Min Bid Price: P 3,213,000

GENERAL SANTOS

TEXT 09267666746

SPR_GSC616 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 37,965sqm
MENESES RD. Brgy. Lagao.
Min Bid Price: P 5,357,000

SPR_GSC317 VACANT LOT
L.A 11,424sqm
DIVERSION RD. Bo. of Apopong
Min Bid Price: P 1,651,000

ZAMBOANGA

TEXT 09209067759

SPR_ZAM628 HOUSE & LOT
L.A645sqmFA 370sqm
Ilang-Ilang St. VILLA STA. MARIA
Min Bid Price: P 2,143,000

SPR_ZAM630 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 495sqm F.A 300sqm
Narra Drive Cor. Unnamed Subd.,
Tugbungan
Min Bid Price: P 572,000

SPR_ZAM631 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 1000sqm F.A 564.91sqm
Jesus Cobato Drive, Canelar
Min Bid Price: P 3,433,000

SPR_ZAM632 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 410sqm
Cabato Road, Tetuan
Min Bid PriceP: P 244,000

SPR_ZAM633 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 400sqm FA. 255.25sqm
Dona Pura Drive Tetuan
Min Bid Price: P 2,420,000

SPR_ZAM634 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 705sqm F.A 341.42sqm
ST. IGNATIUS SUBD. Tetuan
Min Bid Price: P 1,332,000

SPR_ZAM638 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 352sqm
Monserat Dr. San Jose Road
Min Bid Price: P 789,000

SPR_ZAM639 RSDL VACANT LOT
L.A 724sqm
Governor's Camins Rd,
Brgy. Canelar
Min Bid Price: P 5,539,000

SPR_ZAM640 HOUSE & LOT
L.A 1,026sqm F.A 807sqm
MAESTRAS VICENTA St. Sta. Maria
Min Bid Price: P 6,189,000

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Tighter rules on issuance of receipts sought

Compromise deal should cover only first-time offenders–NTRC

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE IS urged to increase the penalty on businesses that do not issue receipts, as this problem was found to be a major source of tax leakage.

The National Tax Research Center (NTRC), an attached agency of the Department of Finance tasked to conduct studies and provide recommendations on tax-related matters, said existing penalties slapped on delinquent businesses was not enough to discourage tax evasion through non-issuance of receipts.

Under the National Internal Revenue Code, owners of businesses that do not issue receipts face imprisonment of two to four years and are required to pay certain fines. They are, however, allowed to enter into a compromise deal with the BIR.

Under Revenue Memorandum Order 56-2000, a business proved not issuing receipts may enter into a compromise deal that requires the payment of P1,000 to P25,000 in fine for the first offense. Second-time offenders may pay a penalty ranging from P2,500 to P50,000.

"There may be a need to review the compromise penalty provided under RMO No. 56-2000 for possible upgrading in order to strengthen its punitive effects," the NTRC said in a study on the problem of rampant non-issuance of receipts.

Also, the NTRC said, the application of the compromise penalty should be limited to cover only first-time offenders.

It explained that existing rules were too lax and that they did not help in addressing the said problem.

BIR officials earlier said that about 90 percent of the establishments covered by its tax mapping operations were found to have tax violations, one of the most common being the non-issuance of receipts.

Under the tax mapping operations, tax agents visit business establishments to check the level of their tax compliance.

The BIR was tasked last year to collect P675.4 billion, but actual collection reached only P651.9 billion.

Tax evasion and corruption were often cited as among the reasons for the shortfall in collections. The others being the declining interest rates, and the lower-than-expected inflation rate and economic growth.

In the interviews conducted by the NTRC, certain businesses had admitted they were not automatically issuing receipts to clients and that they issued receipts only when customers ask of them.

"The reason given for the non-issuance of receipts was to save on costs of printing and registration," the NTRC said.

"While not admitted by the interviewees, the main intent for not issuing receipts is to avoid having records of sales or income from services rendered, which are the basis in the computation of their tax liabilities," the NTRC said.

The holding of tax mapping operations was among the measures adopted by the revenue agency to plug leakages in tax collection. Also, the BIR is now consulting regularly with third-party sources, particularly clients of businesses, to determine the accuracy of the incomes declared by corporate taxpayers,

The revenue agency has likewise adopted the benchmarking system in its auditing operations.

Under this system, the BIR came out a benchmark on incomes of businesses belonging to an industry. Tighter auditing is made on those who will declare incomes substantially lower than the benchmark levels.

The BIR's large taxpayers unit is set to intensify the use of the benchmarking method to determine the accuracy of the tax declarations submitted by more than 1,000 companies belonging to the large taxpayers group.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is welcomed upon her arrival at the Hotel Intercon in Makati City for the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) inaugural meeting and induction of officers for 2007. The inductees are led by (from left) Sergio Oritz-Luis Jr., honorary chair; Miguel Varela, chair emeritus; Samie Lim, PCCI president, and Donald Dee, chair. At his inaugural speech, Lim announced the creation of the council of advisers, the first time in the history of the PCCI, which is composed of the top 22 most successful and powerful business leaders in the country.

ALI-FBDC venture earmarks ₱10B for projects catering to BPO firms

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AYALA LAND INC., THROUGH NEW joint venture ALI Property Partners Corp. (APPCO), is earmarking P10 billion in the next three years for large scale projects that are aimed at meeting the rising demand for office spaces catering to business process outsourcing (BPO) firms, company officials told the INQUIRER.

In an interview, APPCO president Marivic Añonuevo said about P4 billion would go to Dela Rosa E-Services Building, the maiden project of APPCO in Makati and P6 billion to the University of the Philippines North Science and Technology Park in Quezon City.

APPCO is a joint venture between ALI, which owns 36 percent of the company, and investment firms Goldman Sachs' MLT Investments Ltd. and Capmark Asia's Filipinas Investments Ltd., each controlling 32 percent.

The Dela Rosa E-Services Building will have 24 storys, each with a floor plate of around 3,300 square meters. It will have more than 46,000 square meters of gross leasable area.

It will consist of two towers, the first of which will be completed by the end of 2008.

In the meantime, the 38-hectare UP North Science and Technology Park will feature 10 low-rise office buildings to be complemented by retail, residential and hotel components. The first two buildings will break ground in March this year to be completed by the end of the year.

ALI president Jaime Ayala earlier said the science and technology park would support UP's commitment to education, training and research excellence by creating an environment where high-technology enterprises can interact with the academe in research and development.

Aside from the UP IT park, ALI is also set to launch this year its 20-hectare Canlubang BPO Campus, a campus type sprawling development with low-rise IT buildings supported by retail, commercial, residential and recreational developments.

The BPO campus is seen to catalyze the development of ALI's 1,700-hectare landbank in Canlubang as a regional growth center.

With the government confident the country would be able to corner 10 percent of the $100-billion global BPO market by 2010, APPCO is also positive that it could deliver 500,000 square meters of new BPO spaces in three years.

ALI offers BPO office buildings in Metro Manila through PeopleSupport Center and Convergys, both in Makati, InfoNXX in Laguna and the HSBC building in Fort Bonifacio. The HSBC office space, which will be completed this year, is owned by Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. but will be managed by ALI.

Approval of affordable medicine bill sought

SEVERAL NONGOVERNMENT organizations are calling for the speedy passage of the bill on affordable medicine during the two-day special session of Congress which starts today.

In a statement, these groups—led by the Ayos na Gamot sa Abot Kayang Presyo (Agap) coalition and the Cut-the-Cost, Cut-the-Pain Network (3CPNet)—said the passage of House Bill No. 6035 "will finally end the regime of high medicine costs which has deprived millions of sick Filipinos access to treatment."

The groups said the lack of access to affordable medicine "has aggravated the poor health condition of a significant portion of the country's underprivileged groups."

HB 6035, authored by Rep. Junie Cua, chair of the Congress committee of trade and industry, allows the parallel importation of cheaper patented medicines and the early development and manufacturing of the generic versions of the more expensive branded medicines.

It also authorizes pertinent government agencies to issue compulsory licenses to generic firms when warranted by public health emergency situations.

The bill was certified by President Macapagal-Arroyo as a priority measure. The Senate version was passed in January this year.

GSIS eCard enrollment starts

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INsurance System has started enrolling members to the eCard Plus following the setting up of its enrollment centers in its central office in Pasay City, the GSIS field offices and other government establishments in Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Bulacan and Cavite.

By March 1, the GSIS will set up enrollment centers in all GSIS field offices and other select government establishments nationwide.

GSIS members were advised to get in touch with their personnel officers on the enrollment schedule of their agencies to avoid work disruptions. The GSIS has made arrangements with government agencies on their preferred enrollment schedule to ensure their continued operations while their employees are enrolling.

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Products watchdog destroys 47,000 bars of substandard steel

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND Industry's Bureau of Product Standards reported it had destroyed 47,000 pieces of substandard steel bars in a bid to address the continued proliferation of unsafe goods.

BPS director Jesus L. Motoomull said the products were seized from Steelhaus General Merchandise Inc. in Parañaque during an operation of the BPS enforcement team.

Motoomull said Steelhaus had been charged with an administrative case for the illegal distribution and sale of substandard products.

He said such activities were in violation of Republic Act 4109 or the Standards Law, as well as Section 6 of Department Administrative Order 2 Series of 2002.

Steelhause was fined P17,500, while its owner took an oath of undertaking to signify the firm's strict compliance with the requirements of the Philippine National Standards and other related trade laws.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the seized bars were cut into noncommercial sizes to ensure that these would not be sold back to consumers.

"Substandard goods, especially construction materials such as steel bars, pose tremendous risk to the public's safety and should have no place in the market," Favila said. "Being a major component in constructing houses, offices, schools and other infrastructure, steel bars are critical to the life, health and safety of the consuming public."

He said the Department of Trade and Industry would continue to weed out illegal practices in the steel bar industry to protect businesses and ensure the consumers' welfare by certifying only safe and reliable products.

According to Motoomull, the confiscated products were made up 164 tons of 10 mm size steel bars, which did not bear the required markings based on the PNS on steel bars.

"The products have no indication of the bar size and manufacturer's logo, which signifies that these did not undergo the mandatory tests and inspections set by DTI," he explained.

The department had previously reported that a total P60 million worth of various products that did not undergo the government's quality tests before distribution in the market were seized in 2006.

Of that amount, about three-fourths, or P46.38 million, represented at least 300,000 pieces of uncertified and substandard steel bars from 14 establishments last year.

Aside from steel bars, last year's haul included liquefied petroleum gas cylinders, wiring devices, wires and cables, electrical tapes, compact fluorescent lamps, plywood, sanitary wares, flat glass, auto batteries, brake fluid, fire extinguishers, monobloc chairs and Christmas lights.

CIIF's San Miguel dividends may fund gov't coco effort, says DA

₱1-B fund to be released after elections

YAP

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY may now tap the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) group's dividend earnings from its stake in beverage giant San Miguel Corp. to finance the government program to increase the country's coconut production by at least 20 percent to 140,000 metric tons this year.

The dividends are estimated to reach P1.9 billion. The Department of Agriculture hopes to set aside that amount for the PCA program.

The CIIF group of companies holds a block of outstanding shares in San Miguel equivalent to 23 percent, according to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap.

He told the INQUIRER Business staff that the CIIF group would finance the needed refertilization program for some 700,000 hectares of coconut farms nationwide.

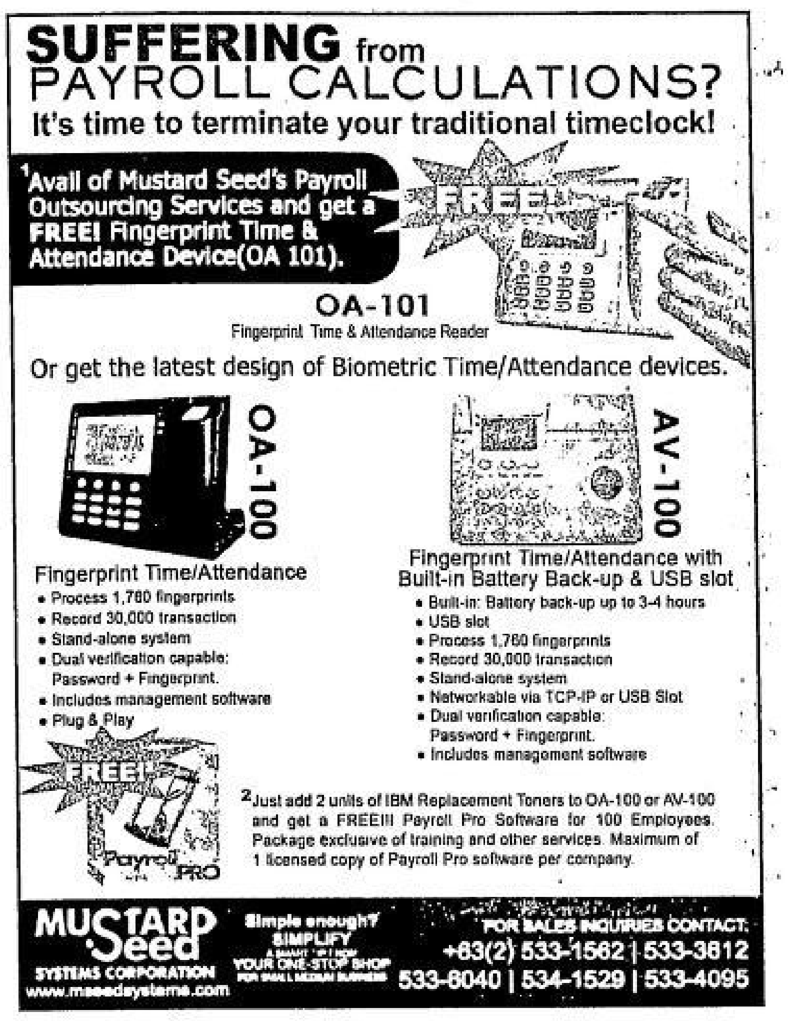
"We have been given the approval, through the assistance of the Office of the Solicitor General, to secure the funds from the CIIF Group," Yap said during the interview.

And to prevent misuse of the fund in light of the coming local elections, the DA chief said that the money would be released after May, in time for the coconut planting season that starts in June.

"There would be strict monitoring of the funds," Yap said. "According to the Supreme Court, it is the CIIF that will administer and monitor the release of the funds."

According to PCA Administrator Oscar Garin, the coconut industry badly needs the fund to arrest declining production in the country's coconut industry.

He estimated that, to produce at least 3 million metric tons of coconut oil by 2010, some P4.5 billion in financing will be required to fertilize 3.2 million hectares of coconut farms around the country.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NTC seen to curb anticompetition practices of telcos

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) is set to issue rules designed to curb anticompetition practices among local telcos, the regulator said during the e-Services Philippines 2007 conference and exhibition.

In an NTC presentation, the regulator is considering a number of ways to curb unfair practices in the telecommunications industry, such as predatory pricing and limiting access of smaller carriers to the backbone networks of dominant players.

The commission has said, time and again, that these practices are observed in carriers with so-called significant market power, or SMP.

In a separate paper, The NTC blamed those with SMP for the inequality in the local telecommunications sector, where the largest two among 73 local exchange carriers account for 75 percent of the subscribers base, while two cellular operators—PLDT-Smart and Globe Telecom—control 96 percent of the mobile service market.

"Also revealing is the fact that the corporate "bottom-line" in 2004 of the two largest carriers showed a net income of P39.2 billion against the net loss of P2.3 billion of the next two largest carriers (Digitel-Sun Cellular and Bayantel)," the NTC said.

To curb predatory and unfair practices in the telecom market, the NTC said it is considering implementing the following:

- Mandate the adoption of a reference document for interconnection and access that specifies the terms and conditions under which an SMP supplier offers to provide access to its network. The document would facilitate interconnection and limit the power of large networks to impose unfair conditions for sharing their facilities.
- Impose additional obligations on carriers having significant market power.
- Unbundle network elements which, according to the NTC, would lower the economic barriers to entry by allowing a new supplier to combine components from existing networks with its own.

The regulator also said unbundling of the local loop will also accelerate the rollout of broadband Internet and growth of e-commerce.

- Require the dominant carriers to allow smaller players to resell their services, including local loop and resources for directory assistance. This means that the SMP supplier will be obliged to allow any licensee to purchase services at a wholesale price so that end-users can enjoy relatively same rates no matter which provider they get the services from.
- Change the reference of price regulation to maximize the use of regulatory resources.

As to how far along the NTC's anti-SMP efforts are coming along, Common Carrier and Authorization director Edgardo Cabarrios said the regulator has conducted consultations and is in the process of preparing the draft rules on reference access offer.

Customs seeks ...

From page B7

cheaper in peso terms, dragging down the collection of the BOC.

The BOC also said earlier that volume of imported oil was lower than expected last year. This was partly due to the increase in oil prices that discouraged imports, and to the creation of domestic sources of oil.

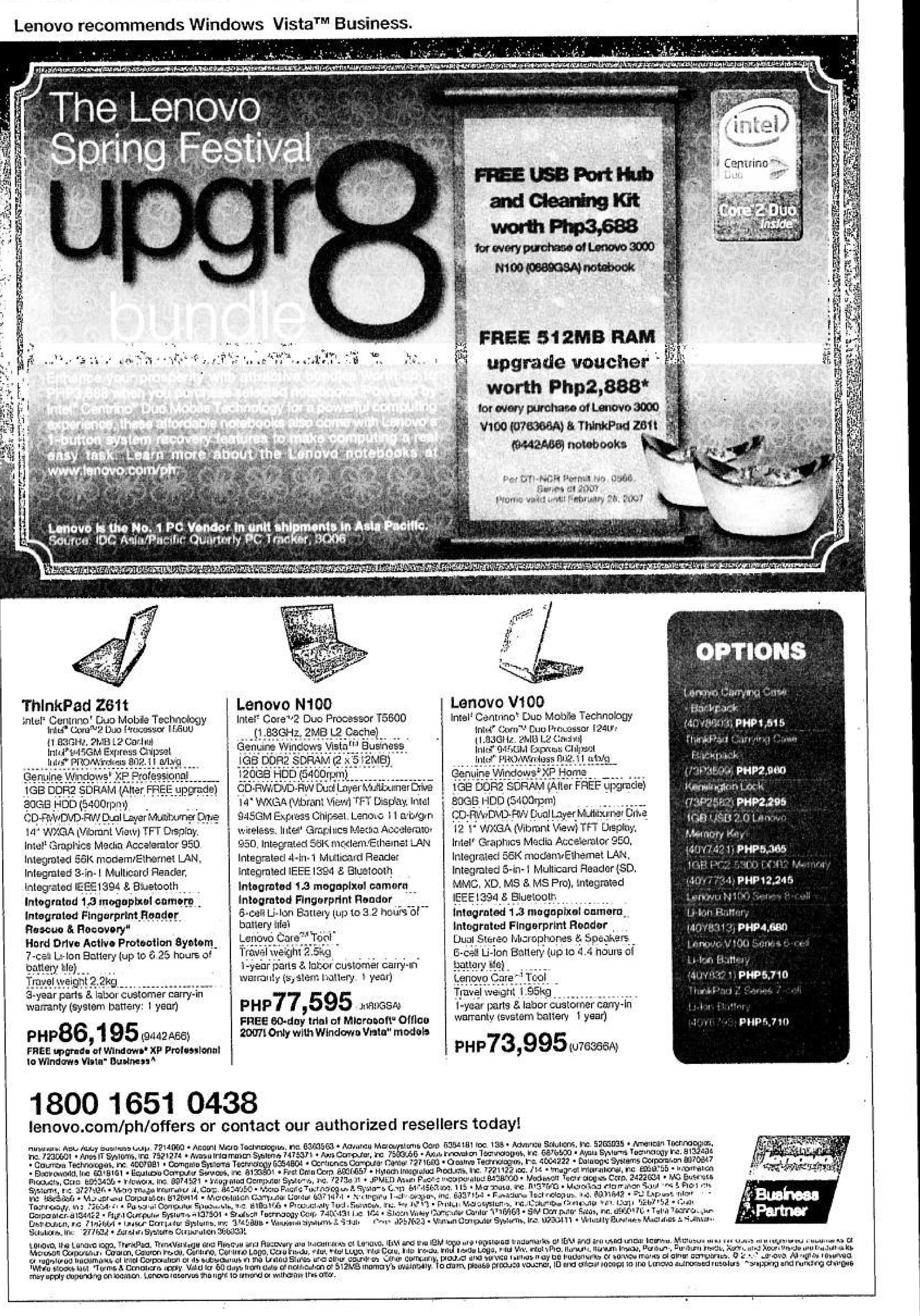
Should the P7.5-billion excess collection claimed by the BOC would be used as base to compute the 15-percent monetary reward, then the collection agency should distribute P1.125 billion among its employees instead of P330 million.

Umali said the proposed target of P184.7 billion was determined by a study conducted by experts from the University of the Philippines and sponsored by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development.

The BOC is now urging the REPB to allow the distribution of the incentives to all BOC employees, even those who failed to meet their individual targets, he added.

"We want everybody to be happy," Umali said. "Even those who did not meet their targets exerted effort to collect, and had a share in the bureau's total collection."

Currently, the REPB is inclined to grant incentives only to those who met their own targets, and impose penalties on those who fell short of their individual goals.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Wall Street gains, but for how long?

NEW YORK—WALL STREET LAST WEEK CLOSED with stock indexes near fresh highs and debate growing about whether the long market rally still has "legs."

The main stock indexes' solid gains last week came on the heels of market-friendly comments from Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke, helping the blue-chip Dow Jones Industrial Average to an all-time high.

Bernanke told Congress in a semiannual report that economic growth is picking up, while inflation appears to be easing.

The not-too-hot, not-too-cold economic scenario sparked strong gains for the stock market, as analysts read the remarks as suggesting Bernanke and the Fed are in no hurry to hike interest rates.

"The major US equity market indices regained their upward momentum and interest rates fell back in reaction to Bernanke's testimonies on the economy and monetary policy," said Stephen Gallagher, economist at Societe Generale.

"The conclusions—moderate growth, slowing inflation but a risk that inflation could be higher—were known in advance," Gallagher added. "Investors responded enthusiastically nonetheless. The overriding feature from Bernanke was a sense of status quo on policy, and that comes with some relief."

Some analysts are growing more cautious about the market, which has not had a correction since a strong run began last July, and wonder whether too much of the gains are simply from momentum.

The Dow advanced 1.48 percent for the week to finish Friday at a record closing high of 12,767.57 ahead of the Presidents' Day three-day holiday weekend.

The broad-market Standard and Poor's 500 index climbed 1.21 percent on the week to 1,455.54 and the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite index added 1.48 percent to 2,499.31. Both indexes held near multiyear highs.

"The recent market move itself appears to be the biggest catalyst driving the bulls," said Fred Dickson, chief market strategist at DA Davidson. "Technical market momentum can be a powerful force drawing investors who had previously missed the move into the market. However, technical-driven buying coming late into an extended rally often narrowly precedes the rally top as buying power often rapidly exhausts itself when the market has moved as far as it has over the last five months."

Dickson said the market has "clearly moved into 'overbought' territory," and added that "we would not be surprised to see the 'bears' begin to step in and launch sell programs to lock up recently generated paper profits on their long positions."

Others said they believed the rally still had room to run.

"This week's market movement has not created any major changes to technical conditions, which continue to suggest the market has more upside ahead," said Gregory Drahuschak at Janney Montgomery Scott.

"We caution, however, a correction at some point is likely. At the same time we continue to think that this will offer an excellent chance to add to positions or to establish new ones." *AFP*

Consumer confidence dims as US housing slides

WASHINGTON—US HOME CONSTRUCTION fell sharply last month while producer prices moderated, according to government data on Friday that lent weight to expectations the Federal Reserve will lower interest rates later this year.

A poll of consumer sentiment also dipped, although the decline in February of the Reuters/University of Michigan Surveys of Consumers, to 93.3 from a two-year high of 96.9 last month, had not been as steep as some had feared.

The Commerce Department said the pace of US home construction shrank 14.3 percent in January, the sharpest drop since October that bucks two months of increases and was much worse than economists had expected.

"I don't think that (housing) starts are going to stay down here," said Michael Cloherty at Bank of America in New York. "But nonetheless, what it tells us is that the direct drag from the housing sector on GDP will last a little bit longer than we had thought before this report."

In other data released on Friday, US producer prices shrank a slightly bigger-than-forecast 0.6 percent in January, as energy prices declined sharply.

The Labor Department said the fall in producer prices was the largest since a 1.8-percent drop in October 2006. The index gained 0.9 percent in December.

Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted producer prices would fall 0.5 percent while core, non-food, non-energy producer prices were forecast to rise 0.2 percent last month, which they did.

Volatile energy prices have been buffeting cost pressures facing producers for some time and in January, energy prices fell 4.6 percent versus a 2.2-percent rise in December and a 6-percent jump in November.

The US Federal Reserve is watchful for evidence that solid growth and tight labor markets may be fueling price pressures and the latest readings should reassure policy-makers.

Producer prices in January were only 0.2 percent above the same month last year, while the 12-month core reading stood 1.8 percent higher.

In addition, US consumer sentiment slipped unexpectedly in February as concerns over unemployment and inflation sapped confidence. *Reuters*

China central bank's forex buildup capped

BEIJING—CHINA HAS ARTIFICIALLY HELD down the accumulation of foreign currency reserves on the books of the central bank by guiding state-owned banks to buy overseas bonds, investment bank Goldman Sachs says.

To shield the banks from currency risk at a time of a rising yuan, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) may have arranged a total of $40-50 billion in currency swaps with Bank of China, China Construction Bank Corp. and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China at an implied yuan appreciation rate of 2-3 percent a year, the bank said.

Goldman's research is the latest attempt by PBOC watchers to explain an apparent paradox: given China's current account surplus last year of about $230-250 billion and foreign direct investment inflows of $63 billion, why did the PBOC's official reserves rise in 2006 by only $247 billion?

On the surface, that would point to "hot money" capital outflows of about $60 billion despite almost universal expectations that the yuan will keep heading higher.

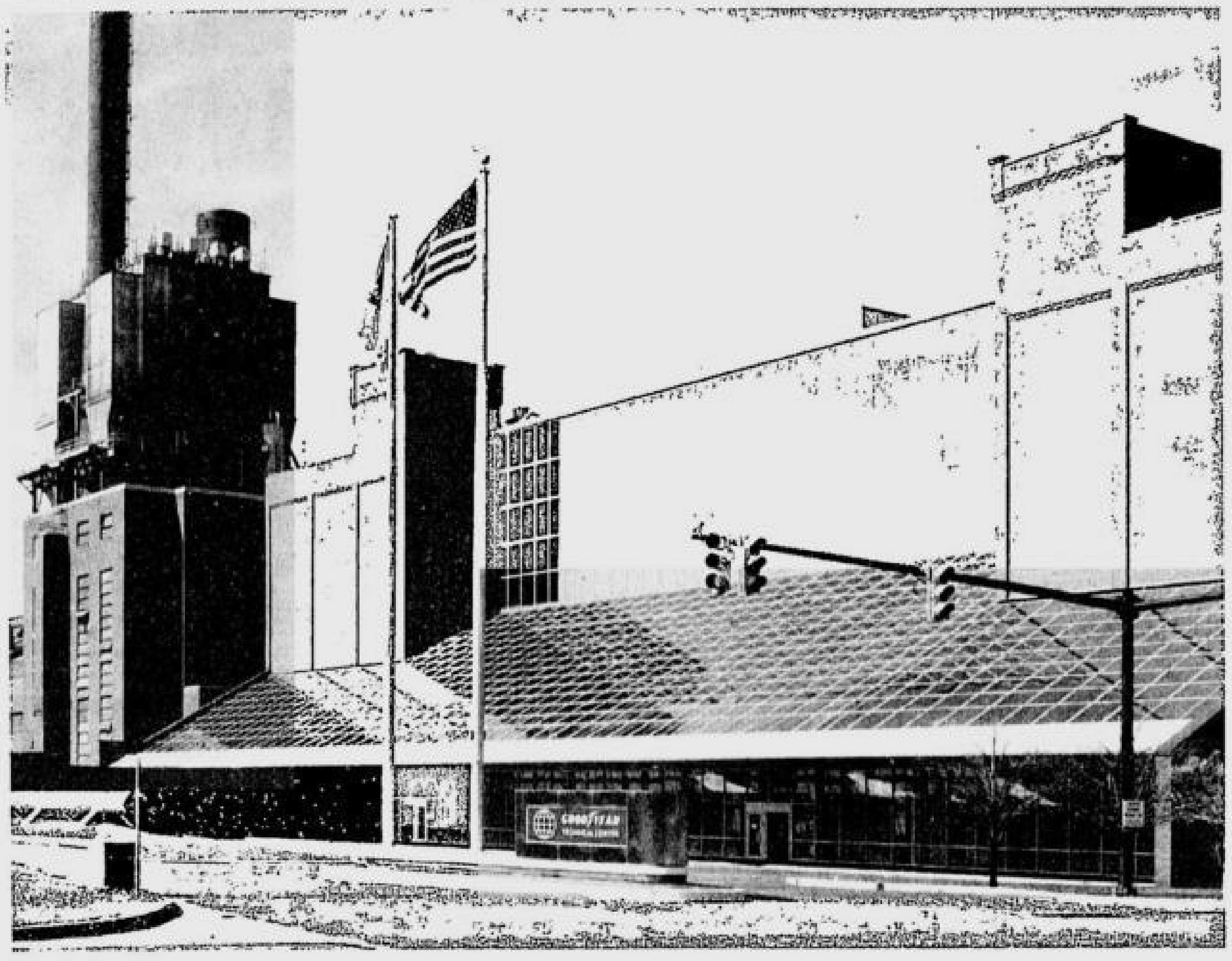
Part of the discrepancy might be due to unannounced use of the central bank's reserves. Last month, Beijing disclosed that it had pumped $4 billion into the country's biggest reinsurer.

But Goldman economists Hong Liang and Eva Yi, drawing on flow of funds data for the banking system, said the answer lay principally in an increase of $70 billion in foreign exchange assets held by Chinese commercial banks.

That was twice as much as the rise in 2005 and took banks' FX position to about $190 billion, or 15 percent of the banking system's total FX position—the rest is held by the PBOC.

Balance of payments data for the first half of 2006 show banks ploughed most of the foreign currency into bonds.

Liang and Yi said it was hard to argue that banks chose to buy FX bonds on commercial grounds because they have limited FX operations and, since August 2006 when the yuan's pace of climb started to quicken, the trade has been losing money. *Reuters*



CRIPPLING STRIKE

The Goodyear Technical Center in Akron is shown in this 2006 file photo. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s leader is trying to put the costly effects of a three-month strike behind the tiremaker and concentrate on revving up sales after reporting a $358 million loss in the fourth quarter. AP

Asahi Breweries to propose capital tie to Sapporo

TOKYO—JAPAN'S ASAHI BREWERIES Ltd. will propose a business and capital alliance to rival beer maker Sapporo Holdings, which faces a possible $1.3-billion takeover bid from US hedge fund Steel Partners, the Nikkei newspaper said on Saturday.

Asahi denied the report, as it did one on Friday in the Yomiuri newspaper saying Asahi had proposed an alliance under which it and Sapporo would work together in areas such as product delivery and soft drinks as a step toward full integration.

Asahi president Hitoshi Ogita was quoted by Kyodo News on Saturday as saying he had no plans to form a capital tie or business integration with Sapporo, in part because he saw no benefits from combining production or personnel.

Sapporo, Japan's third-biggest brewer after Asahi and Kirin Brewery, has struggled to boost its share of Japan's saturated beer market due to relatively weak brands and marketing power, though it boasts of a strong real estate business.

The heightened attention on the beer industry was sparked by Steel Partners, which said on Thursday it may seek to raise its stake in Sapporo to 66.6 percent from about 18.5 percent at a cost of about 150 billion yen ($1.3 billion).

Sapporo shares zoomed past the fund's mooted offer price of around 825 yen per share on Friday, jumping 12.6 percent to 891 yen, with a flood of buy orders as investors anticipated a battle for control of the 131-year-old brewer, whose beer brands include Black Label and Yebisu.

The Nikkei reported on Saturday that executives from Asahi and Sapporo were scheduled to meet this weekend to discuss an alliance. The paper said that Asahi would likely offer to buy Steel Partners' stake as part of the deal.

"There is no plan to meet Sapporo executives. Asahi does not plan to propose a capital alliance," Asahi spokesman Yasuhiro Nakahara said. *Reuters*

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YouTube's anti-piracy software policy draws fire

NEW YORK—THE MEDIA INDUSTRY IS clashing with YouTube over its proposal to offer anti-piracy tools only to companies that have distribution deals with the top online video-sharing service, media insiders said.

YouTube, owned by Google Inc., plans to introduce technology to help media companies identify pirated videos uploaded by users. But the tools are currently being offered as part of broader negotiations on licensing deals, they said.

The move contrasts with YouTube's biggest rival, News Corp.'s, popular Internet social network, MySpace, which said on Monday it would offer its own version of copyright protection services for free.

YouTube's "proposition that they will only protect copyrighted content if there's a business deal in place is unacceptable," a spokesman for Viacom Inc., owner of MTV Networks and Comedy Central, said this week.

One media industry source likened YouTube's policy to a "mafia shakedown."

Earlier this month, Viacom demanded YouTube remove more than 100,000 Viacom video clips from the site after the two sides failed to reach a distribution agreement.

Viacom has become the poster child of dissent against YouTube, trying to prevent the site from turning into the Apple Inc. of online video.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs is credited with saving the music industry by simplifying the process of buying and playing digital music with the iTunes online store. But the company's chokehold on the industry is now resented by record companies.

In a prepared statement, YouTube said the process of identifying copyrighted material is not an automated process and required the cooperation of media company partners.

For instance, a clip of a TV show owned by one company might contain music produced by another, making the process of identifying ownership difficult.

"These matters are very complicated and we are working with our partners to identify and solve these problems," YouTube said in an e-mailed statement.

Indeed, even Viacom admits to the difficulties of locating copyrighted content. About 60 to 70 videos out of the 100,000 it demanded to be removed were not owned by Viacom.

Despite the public vitriol between YouTube and the media industry, some industry experts dismiss the spats as little more than saber rattling ahead of eventual deals.

Media companies—torn over how best to court younger viewers who split their leisure time between watching TV, surfing the Internet and playing video games—are attempting to make their programming more widely available, especially on popular services such as YouTube.

"The debates are about negotiations more than anything else—who's going to pay whom and how much," said Saul Berman, IBM's global media and entertainment strategy leader.

Some legal experts said YouTube has no obligation to invest heavily in leading-edge technology only to give it away.

"There's no reason for me to spend a lot of money on a ... solution and give it away for free," said Gregory Rutchik, founding partner of San Francisco-based piracy litigation firm The Arts & Technology Law Group.

Forrester Research analyst James McQuivey agreed, adding that media companies might feel they are being blackmailed into signing distribution deals with YouTube.

"If YouTube can sweeten the pot and come back with a better offer, I think the concerns of the blackmail naturally vanish," McQuivey said. *Reuters*

E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback: inquirer it name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

A new and high-tech way to connect family members

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

INTERACTION is much enhanced when using one's finger (in addition, a cool ripple effect radiates from the point touched).

FOR DECADES, THE REFRIGERATOR has served as a common point of interaction for sharing information and communication.

It's effective as a space for leaving notes, drawings and photos (via magnets, tape or Post-it notes) as well as sticking a calendar for scheduling events.

Things may soon change as Hewlett-Packard attempts to replace the multitasking appliance with its TouchSmart PC, the company's first stab at an all-in-one PC as well as its first desktop system to incorporate a touchscreen display.

"The TouchSmart takes touch screen experience even further with SmartCenter software, an HP designed application based on Microsoft Windows Vista (Home Premium edition). With customizable user interface, large icons, integrated TV tuner and shortcuts to other media, this machine is built to be the hub of a range of family activities," described Ameer Karim, HP's director of Worldwide Product Marketing for Consumer PC and Digital Entertainment during last month's launch of HP's new consumer desktop and notebook range in Seoul, South Korea.

Although HP Philippines set no date for its arrival here, the TouchSmart sells at around $2,500 (roughly P120,600) in other Asia-Pacific market.

Family bulletin

Karim said TouchSmart is intended to act as a family's bulletin board so HP packed the TouchSmart with applications, including HP SmartCalendar for family appointments and events, and HP PhotoSmart Touch to manage digital photos.

The TouchSmart comes in piano-black hue, silver accents and a graceful, Z-angled supporting frame.

"Anyone would be proud to have this machine placed in the kitchen, family room, living room or some other place where the entire family converges. With one touch, one can check the weather, check e-mail, play cards, watch favorite movie/television show or even edit and print photos (via a separately sold HP 617 PhotoPrinter that can be mounted behind the display monitor)," he said.

It also helps that HP designers chose a wireless keyboard that can be tucked neatly under the unit, a wireless laser mouse, stylus that can be stored in a slot on the top of the screen, and a remote control, features that eliminate unnecessary clutters.

KARIN believes with the TouchSmart, HP has finally found a new way to connect families who have run out of refrigerator space.

Main draw

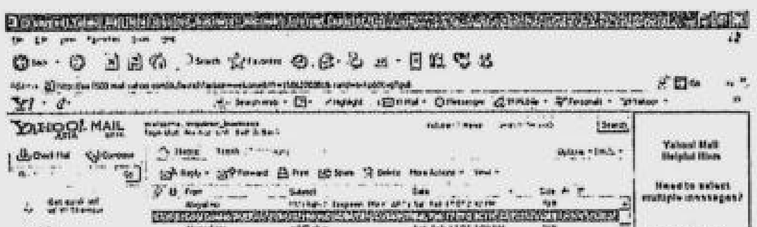
TouchSmart's main draw is its 19-inch high definition widescreen whose height can be adjusted as well as tilted to either landscape or portrait format.

"Using the touch-sensitive screen is a refreshing experience and perhaps more enjoyable than using the mouse or stylus. Using the finger, one could hand-write notes, leave audio messages and set reminders for other users of the computer. And with one touch, one can scroll through Windows Media Center to watch a movie, record TV (programs) or listen to music," Karim said.

All these functions are ably accomplished thanks to TouchSmart's 2GB memory, 1.6-GHz Turion 64 X2 TL-52 mobile CPU, and integrated nVidia GeForce Go 7600 graphics.

The machine tucked many extras, too: an integrated 1.3-megapixel webcam; a microphone; integrated FM/TV tuner; media card reader and front audio-video inputs; Bluetooth; built-in wireless local area network; slot-loading DVD burner with LightScribe label etching and dedicated playback buttons.

Indeed, with the TouchSmart, Karim believed HP is ushering in a generation of more tech-savvy family members and may have finally found a new way to connect families who have run out of refrigerator space.



Yahoo! merges chat with e-mail service

By Riza T. Olchondra

YAHOO! HAS ROLLED OUT A BETA version of its web-based e-mail program integrated with the popular Yahoo! Instant Messenger.

The integrated service (http://new.mail.yahoo.com) has been available to beta users since Feb. 12 and is similar to Google's chat-integrated Gmail.

The idea is to enable users to access chat from within the webmail program and not have to open the Messenger window. Users can also convert e-mails into instant messages when friends come online using the drag and drop feature.

Other features are e-mail organization, message preview, an integrated calendar and a podcast reader.

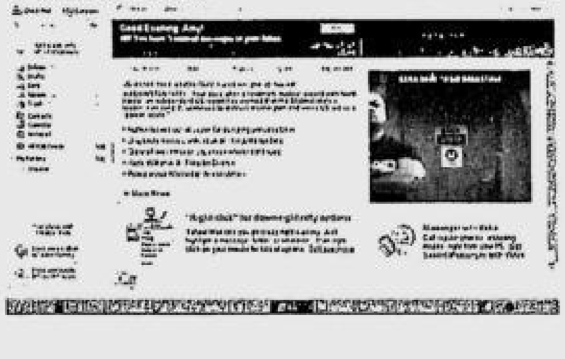
Like the classic Yahoo! Mail experience, the new version is a free, browser-based service, accessible from virtually any computer connected to the Internet, without the need for a software download. Users of Yahoo Mail will be able to see which of their messaging contacts are online.

An official statement from Yahoo! said the integrated service "will be available to all users in the coming months."

"By bringing Yahoo!'s leading instant messaging capabilities to e-mail users, we're transforming Yahoo! Mail into a tool that's about communicating; regardless of the form that communication takes," said Yahoo! Mail vice president John Kremer.

A screencast demonstrating the new instant messaging capabilities in the Yahoo! Mail beta is available at http://ymailupdates.com/.

Yahoo Messenger reportedly has 100 million users, while Yahoo Mail has an estimated 250 million users. Last year, Yahoo signed an interoperability agreement with Microsoft's Windows Live Messenger, which has a user base of about 200 million.



Best low-cost handsets picked

By Riza T. Olchondra

MOTOROLA AND LG HAVE THE best low-cost handsets, the GSM Association said at the 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

The GSM Association is a global trade group representing more than 700 GSM mobile phone operators in 217 countries and territories worldwide. The association also has tie-ups with more than 180 global manufacturers and suppliers.

In its website, the GSM Association said Motorola won the Best Ultra Low-Cost Handset award for the 2G Motofone F3 at the 12th Annual GSM Association Global Mobile Awards on Feb. 13.

Others cited were Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd, whose SGH-D900 was voted Best GSM Mobile Handset or Device, and Sony Ericsson, whose K800 Cyber-Shot phone was the Best 3GSM Mobile Handset or Device.

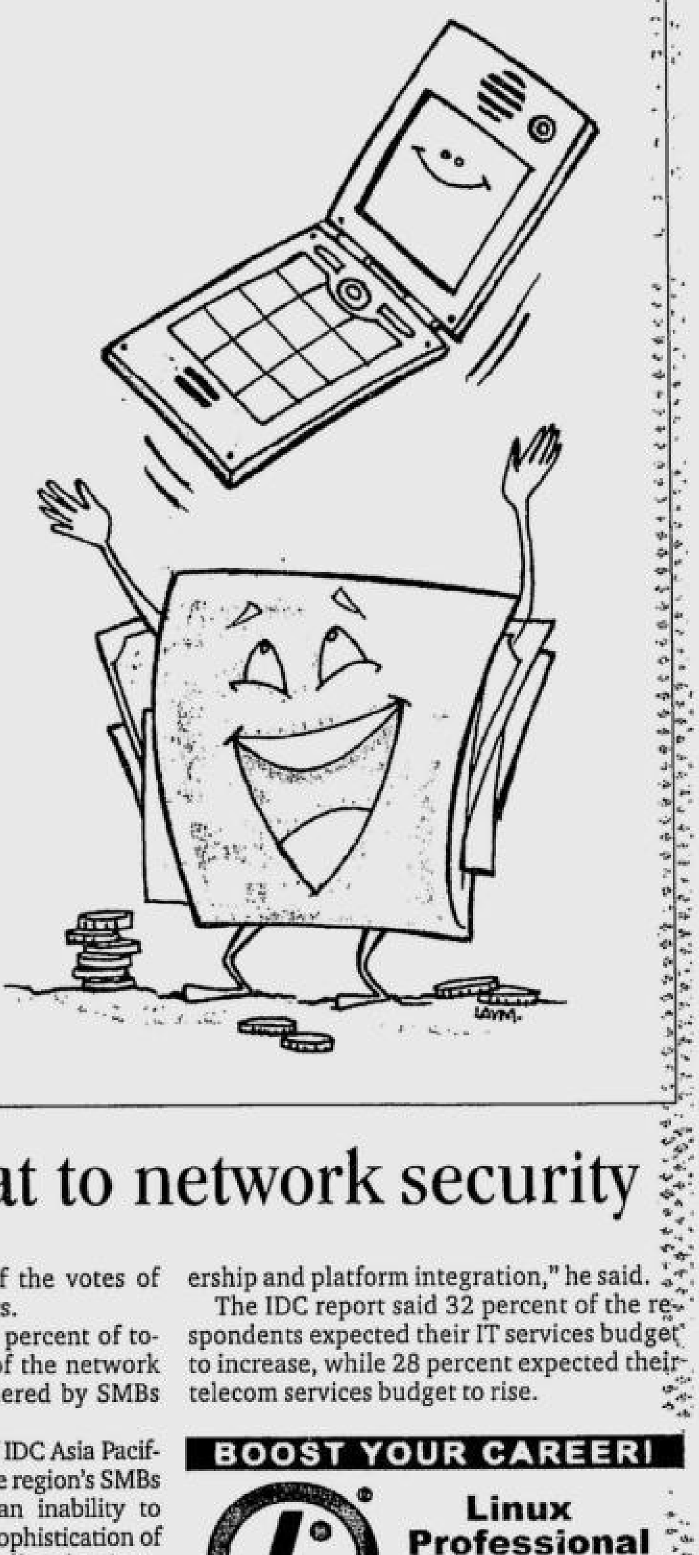
Also during the 3GSM World Congress, 12 mobile phone operators (Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom, Cingular Wireless, Hutchison 3G, KTF, MTN, Orange, Telecom Italia, Telefonica, Telenor, T-Mobile and Vodafone) picked LG's KU250 from 19 entries to become the handset model for its "3G for All" campaign due to its appeal to the mass market. The same mobile phone operators jointly drafted a common set of requirements for the GSM Association's campaign.

The "3G for All" campaign aims to make third-generation mobile services accessible to a wider user base.

The LG-KU250 is 15mm thick. Containing a chipset supplied by Qualcomm, the handset supports video calls, high-speed Internet access, multi-tasking and a wide range of other multimedia services, the mobile operators said.

Its selection means LG will be endorsed by GSM Association operators in their respective markets between April 2007 and December 2007. The LG-KU250 handset will be made available to all 3GSM mobile phone operators in the second quarter of this year.

The association said the KU250 would be "available at a wholesale price that is about 30 percent less than the typical entry-level 3G phone and fully-competitive with the multimedia second-generation handsets on sale today."



Viruses remain biggest threat to network security

By Abigail L. Ho

ALMOST HALF OF THE SMALL AND MEDIUM businesses in the Asia-Pacific region excluding Japan consider viruses as their biggest headache with regard to the security of their networks.

According to an IDC report, 39.5 percent of the SMBs that it polled said the introduction of viruses into their IT network represented the greatest threat to their companies' network, data and Internet security.

Corruption or replication of data and external hacking are the second and third biggest network security threats for Asia-Pacific SMBs, fetching 15.8 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively, of the votes of the report's 5,778 respondents.

Employee sabotage, at 8.1 percent of total responses, was also one of the network security threats being considered by SMBs in the region.

Walter Lee, vice president of IDC Asia Pacific, said that due to their size, the region's SMBs suffered budget constraints, an inability to keep up with the number and sophistication of virus attacks, a lack of skilled staff, and an incapability to keep their technologies and network environment updated.

"Service providers can address these concerns with cost-effective, easy-to-manage solutions focusing on low total cost of ownership and platform integration," he said.

The IDC report said 32 percent of the respondents expected their IT services budget to increase, while 28 percent expected their telecom services budget to rise.

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PhP43,931.61/sqm	PhP32,311.69/sqm	PhP12,391.72/sqm	PhP36,797.86/sqm	PhP38,252.87/sqm

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MAKATI CITY

LOT 1 – CONDO CMML
Floor Area 654.4 sqm.
4F The World Center, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.
Minimum Bid Price 29,940,000

LOT 2 – CONDO CMML
Floor Area 659.68 sqm.
6F The World Center, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.
Minimum Bid Price 37,945,000

LOT 3 - CONDO-CMML
Floor Area 385 sqm.
Unit 201, G/F Saguittarius Bldg
HV dela Costa St., Salcedo Vill
Minimum Bid Price 26,950,000

LOT 4 - CONDO-CMML
Floor Area 65.56 sqm.
Unit 1103 (Eleventh Sky) 11F,
Cityland Condo 10 Tower I, HV dela
Costa St. Salcedo Village
Minimum Bid Price 1,784,000

LOT 5 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 66.11 sqm.
3B, Tharcon Condo. N. Garcia St.
Minimum Bid Price 1,736,000

MANDALUYONG CITY

LOT 6 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 174.15 sqm.
Unit 3001B, Wack Wack Twin
Towers Condo Wack Wack Rd
Minimum Bid Price 7,055,000

PARANAQUE CITY

Asiaworld City, Brgy. Tambo

LOT 7 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 363.94 sqm.
Unit 15C - Cleveland Tower
Minimum Bid Price 8,280,000

LOT 8 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 363.94 sqm.
U-5C - Cleveland Tower
Minimum Bid Price 8,171,000

LOT 9 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 360.71 sqm.
Unit 5B - Cleveland Tower
Minimum Bid Price 8,116,000

LOT 10 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 333.2 sqm.
Unit 10A - Washington Tower
Minimum Bid Price 7,997,000

PASIG CITY

LOT 11 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 274.47 sqm.
Unit PH-A, Chateau Verde Condo.
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. Bo. Ugong
Minimum Bid Price 6,999,000

LOT 12 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 122.83 sqm.
Unit 325 - Chateau Verde Condo.
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave, Bo. Ugong
Minimum Bid Price 2,880,000

CAVITE

LOT 13 - CONDO-RSDL
Floor Area 62.89 sqm.
Unit 22-A. Cluster Dominico Vista
de Loro Heights.Tomale
Minimum Bid Price 906,000

COMMERCIAL

PASIG CITY

LOT 14 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 10,156 sqm.
Along Amang Rodriguez Ave.,
Barrio Manggahan
Minimum Bid Price 106,404,000

QUEZON CITY

LOT 15 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 4,304 sqm.
Quirino Highway cor. Mahgaya
Drive, Novaliches
Minimum Bid Price 57,244,000

LOT 16 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 4,666.79 sqm.
Aurora Blvd. cor. Balete Drive,
Cubao
Minimum Bid Price 82,136,000

LOT 17 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 3,010.73 sqm.
Aurora Blvd. cor. Balete Drive
Cubao
Minimum Bid Price 48,172,000

RESIDENTIAL

MUNTINLUPA CITY

LOT 18 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 1,596 sqm.
Floor Area 830 sqm.
No. 3 Don Jesus Blvd., Alabang
Hills Village, Phase 2, Bo Alabang
Minimum Bid Price 23,303,000

PARANAQUE CITY

LOT 19 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 58.5 sqm.
Floor Area 130 sqm.
Unit 136 Sherwood Heights,
Jerusalem St., Multinational Village
Minimum Bid Price 2,316,000

LOT 20 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 195 sqm.
Floor Area 395 sqm.
5002 San Isidro St., San
Antonio Valley V
Minimum Bid Price 3,477,000

QUEZON CITY

LOT 21 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 300 sqm.
Floor Area 148 sqm.
113K-8th St., Kamias, Diliman
Minimum Bid Price 3,516,000

LOT 22 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 400 sqm.
Floor Area 535 sqm.
No. 71 Mapang-akit St., Diliman
Minimum Bid Price 8,112,000

LOT 23 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area: sqm.
Kalayaan Ave. cor. Mapamaraan St,
Diliman
Minimum Bid Price TBA

VALENZUELA CITY

LOT 24 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 500 sqm.
Pag-ibig St. Brgy Lingunan
Minimum Bid Price 720,000

RIZAL

LOT 25 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 103 sqm.
Floor Area 60 sqm.
Lot 5 Block 4 St. Andrew St Villa
Estrella Subd., Bo. Carangalan,
Cainta
Minimum Bid Price TBA

Sta. Barbara Luxury Estates Subd. Mission Hills, Brgy. San Roque, Antipolo City

LOT 26 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,081 sqm.
Lot 14, Blk 1 Beverly St
Minimum Bid Price 3,243,000

LOT 27 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,222 sqm.
Lot 7, Blk 3 Beverly St
Minimum Bid Price 3,666,000

LOT 28 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.
Lot 2, Blk 5 Belmont St
Minimum Bid Price 3,000,000

LOT 29 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.
Lot 6, Blk. 5 Belmont St
Minimum Bid Price 3,000,000

LOT 30 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 486 sqm.
Lot 8, Blk 1 Mangold St.,
St Monica II Classic Estate Subd.
Mission Hills, Brgy San Roque,
Antipolo City
Minimum Bid Price 1,750,000

LOT 31 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,454 sqm.
Westminster Road, Town & Country
Estate, Mayamol, Antipolo
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 32 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 360 sqm.
Barrio Dela Paz Antipolo City
Minimum Bid Price 504,000

Sta. Catalina I Subd., Mission Hills, Brgy. Mahabang Parang, Angono

LOT 33 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 355 sqm.
Lot 1, Blk 2, Camel/Clarkson St.
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 34 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 308 sqm.
Lot 28, Blk. 1, Concord St.
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 35 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 308 sqm.
Lot 18, Blk. 2, Concord St.
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 36 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 308 sqm.
Lot 56, Blk. 1, Corinth St
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 37 – LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 20,400 sqm.
Bo. San Jose, Rodriguez
Minimum Bid Price 23,070,000

BATANGAS

LOT 38 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 240 sqm.
Floor Area 150 sqm.
No. 417 San Bernardo Vil., Daraza,
Tanauan
Minimum Bid Price 766,000

BULACAN

Town & Country North Subd., Abangan, Marilao, Bulacan

LOT 39 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 240 sqm.
Lot 21, Blk 27 Guijo St.
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 40 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 240 sqm.
Lot 20, Blk 27 Guijo St
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 41 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 455 sqm.
Lot 18, Blk 29, along Nangka St.
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 42 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 180 sqm.
Dao St., Town and Country North
Subd., Abangan, Marilao
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 43 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.
Malhacan Road, Meycauayan
Minimum Bid Price 8,121,000

LOT 44 – LOT ONLY,
Lot Area 204 sqm.
Lot 55 Block 31 Silver Street,
Cityland Subd., Pulong Buhangin,
Sta Maria
Minimum Bid Price 172,000

LOT 45 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 11,386 sqm.
San Rafael, Bulacan
Minimum Bid Price 2,232,000

LOT 46 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 803 + 319 sqm.
Lot 1 & 2, Blk 5, Papaya St.,
Constantino Park Subd., Marilao
Minimum Bid Price 1,686,000

LOT 47 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 575 sqm.
National Road Bo Bigte Norzagaray,
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 48 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 343 sqm.
Floor Area 306 sqm.
Bo. Saluysoy, Meycauayan
Minimum Bid Price 1,425,000

CAVITE

LOT 49 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 198,404 sqm.
Ligtong, Rosario
Minimum Bid Price 55,667,000

LOT 50 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 5 Block 41 Madrid St., Town and
Country West Subdivision, Bo.
Molino, Bacoor
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 51 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 1,557 sqm.
Bo. Lalaan, Silang
Minimum Bid Price TBA

LOT 52 - RSDL LOT
Lot Area 240 sqm.
Road Lot 15, Green Valley Subd.
San Nicolas, Bacoor
Minimum Bid Price 240,000

Grand Villas Subd (w/in FCIE) Bo. Lancaan, Dasmariñas

LOT 53 – LOT ONLY
(with unfinished structure)
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 3 Block 3, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 485,000

LOT 54 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 4 Block 3, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 55 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 5 Block 3, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 891,000

LOT 56 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 9 Block 3, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 485,000

LOT 57 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 152 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 15 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 1,159,000

LOT 58 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 16 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 59 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 17 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 1,130,000

LOT 60 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 18 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 1,436,000

LOT 61 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 19 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 62 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 20 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 63 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 21 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 64 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 22 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LOT 65 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 23 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 485,000

LOT 66 - LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Floor Area 100 sqm.
Lot 24 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 485,000

LOT 67 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 25 Block 2, Road Lot 3
Minimum Bid Price 450,000

LAGUNA

LOT 68 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 547 sqm.
Zavalla & Purificacion Sts., Zavalla
Village 3, Bo. Tagapo, Sta. Rosa
Minimum Bid Price 1,641,000

LOT 69 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 340 sqm.
Tenessee St., Town & Country
Southville Subd., Bo. Calaboso,
Biñan
Minimum Bid Price 893,000

LOT 70 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area 150 sqm.
Lot 6, Blk 10, La Residencia De Sta. Rosa
Minimum Bid Price 619,000

INDUSTRIAL

PARAÑAQUE CITY

LOT 71 – LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 1,330 sqm.
Doña Irenea Avenue, Ireneville
Subd.
Minimum Bid Price 25,036,000

CAVITE

LOT 72 – LOT ONLY
Lot Area 17,729 sqm.
Poblacion, Rosario
Minimum Bid Price 29,918,000

LOT 73 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area 6,030 sqm.
Brgy. Maguyam, Silang
Minimum Bid Price 11,819,000

MIXED-USE

BATANGAS

LOT 74 - RSDL/AGRI LOT
Lot Area 15,179 sqm.
San Felix, Sto. Tomas
Minimum Bid Price 8,348,000

CAVITE

LOT 75 – LOT W/ IMPRVMNT
Lot Area 5,000 sqm.
Bo. Gregorio, Trece Martires
Minimum Bid Price 9,864,000

RSDL/AGRI LOT
Rodeo Countryside Subd, Brgy Esperanza, Alfonso Cavite
Minimum Bid Price: 900,000/lot

LOT 76- Lot 29, Blk. 2
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 77- Lot 3, Blk. 5
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 78 Lot 12 Blk 7
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 79 Lot 14, Blk 7
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 80- Lot 16, Blk 7
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 81- Lot 18 Blk 7
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 82- Lot 2, Blk 15
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.

LOT 83- Lot 26 Blk 6
Lot Area 925 sqm.

LOT 84- Lot 28 Blk 6
Lot Area 925 sqm.

RSDL LOT
Dreamworld Subd., A. Soriano Highway, Bgy. Timalan, Naic

LOT 85– Lot 4 Blk 5
Lot Area 1,067 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,067,000

LOT 86- Lot 11 Blk 5
Lot Area 1,076 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,076,000

LOT 87- Lot 12 Blk 5
Lot Area 1,000 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,000,000

LOT 88 Lot 11, Blk 6
Lot Area 993 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 993,000

LOT 89 Lot 6, Blk 11
Lot Area 4,463 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 4,463,000

LOT 90- Lot 7, Blk. 14
Lot Area 1,347 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,347,000

LOT 91- Lot 10, Blk. 14
Lot Area 1,323 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,323,000

LOT 92- Lot 20, Blk 14
Lot Area 1,511 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,209,000

LAGUNA

RSDL/AGRI LOT
Paradise Valley Farmlot Subd., Brgy. Linao, Calauan

LOT 93- Lot 1, Blk. 2
Lot Area 6,889 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 3,376,000

LOT 94- Lot 2, Blk. 2
Lot Area 5,862 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 2,873,000

LOT 95- Lot 3, Blk 2
Lot Area 4,834 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 2,369,000

LOT 96- Lot 4, Blk 2
Lot Area 3,365 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,650,000

LOT 97- Lot 5, Blk 2
Lot Area 3,262 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,599,000

LOT 98 Lot 7, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,453 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,031,000

LOT 99 Lot 8 Blk 2
Lot Area 2,960 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,244,000

LOT 100- Lot 9, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,778 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,167,000

LOT 101– Lot 10, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,383 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,001,000

LOT 102- Lot 12, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,730 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,529,000

LOT 103 Lot 13, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,729 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,529,000

LOT 104- Lot 14, Blk 2
Lot Area 2,719 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,523,000

LOT 105- Lot 1, Blk 3
Lot Area 2,526 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,503,000

LOT 106- Lot 3, Blk 3
Lot Area 2,683 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,404,000

LOT 107- Lot 4 Blk 3
Lot Area 2,506 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,403,000

LOT 108- Lot 2, Blk 3
Lot Area 2,504 sqm.
Minimum Bid Price 1,403,000

LOT 109 RSDL/AGRI LOT
Lot Area 17,929 sqm.
Bo. Pagsanjan, Pagsanjan
Minimum Bid Price 2,000,000

LOT 110 - RSDL LOT
Lot Area 4,422 sqm.
Brgy. Masaya Bay
Minimum Bid Price 5,306,000

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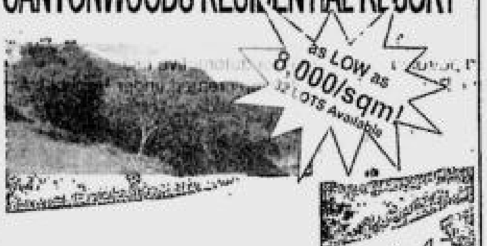

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PAD: More than just leg pain

IT'S 3 P.M. AND YOU GET OUT OF YOUR OFFICE for a quick stretching and walking. Then, you suddenly feel pain in your thigh and numbness in the leg as you walk, but the symptoms ease during rest. You may not worry about it, but these could be symptoms of peripheral arterial disease (PAD).

PAD, a condition that is especially prevalent among those with diabetes, refers to the partial or complete blockage of major arteries outside the heart that supply blood to other important areas of the body, such as the brain, kidneys, arms and legs.

Symptoms include pain in the calf or thigh, discomfort, fatigue, and numbness in the legs when walking then eases during rest. One of the most common symptoms of PAD is intermittent claudication (IC). Patients with IC feel numbness and fatigue in the legs and this may affect their walking distance.

In addition to diet and exercise, drugs are prescribed to relieve symptoms of PAD and prevent further complications. Cilostazol is one of the drugs recommended to treat IC as it allows patients to increase their walking distance. In a study comparing the effects of cilostazol and placebo (sugar pill) on walking distance, the maximal walking distance of cilostazol patients improved by 44 to 50 percent compared to a 21-percent improvement achieved by patients taking placebo.

In addition, cilostazol is utilized regularly for the prevention of secondary stroke. Cilostazol has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of recurrent strokes without affecting the occurrence of intracranial hemorrhage.

In the Cilostazol Stroke Prevention Study, a randomized, placebo-controlled trial involving more than 1,000 Japanese patients, cilostazol was found to reduce the risk of secondary stroke by 41.7 percent compared with placebo, a statistically significant reduction of 1.5 percent.

Therapy with cilostazol also resulted in improvements in lipid profile, with significant increases in HDL-cholesterol levels of about 10 percent, and a significant decrease in triglyceride levels of about 15 percent.

To support Filipino patients in their fight against PAD, Otsuka Pharmaceutical launched the Improve Peripheral Arterial Disease Awareness Club (i-PAD), a project which aims to aid doctors diagnose PAD among diabetic patients. It also aims to educate people about this disease, especially those who are at risk of it.

Under the i-PAD is the Bantay Paa project, which aims to determine the prevalence of PAD among diabetic patients through ABI (ankle brachial index) screening and monofilament testing. ABI screening is a patient-friendly, inexpensive technique that compares blood pressures between the patient's arms and ankles. The ABI test is a useful tool, as it not only provides clinicians with a means of identification of PAD, but also with information regarding the severity of PAD that can assist in guiding a treatment approach.

For more information about PAD and the i-PAD Awareness Club, call the i-PAD Connect hotline at 811-i-PAD for Metro Manila (811-4-723) and for provincial areas, call toll free 1-800-1888-i-PAD (1-800-1888-4-723).

How to catch company thieves

HAVE YOU BEEN WORRYING ABOUT YOUR company's unexplained losses? Have you noticed sudden changes in your employees' demeanor? Have you questioned your employees' honesty?

Put an end to your worries by attending a one-day seminar entitled "How To Catch Company Thieves", to be presented by Citizen Truth Verifier Academy, Inc. (CTVAI), a subsidiary of Truth Verifier Systems, Inc. (TVSI), the country's first and best lie detector, private detective and investigative company.

The highlight of the seminar is the Whistleblower Hotline Assistance, wherein everyone in the company would be taught on how to discreetly report dishonesty in the workplace without being identified to avoid retaliation. This seminar would likewise help Corporate Executives, Fraud Examiners, Auditors, HR Managers, Security Professionals, Investigators and others to easily see fraudulent activities within the workplace, thereby, increasing employee productivity level and minimizing company losses brought by fraud, internal theft or other forms of illegal acts.

The faculty of lecturers includes the Former Court of Appeals Justice Luis L. Victor, Former PNP Deputy Director General P/Gen. Pantaleon G. Dumlao, Former AVP-HR Group Asian Bank/Global Bank Ms. Josefina B.G. Castillo, TVSI President Capt. Conrado G. Dumlao, Chief Anti-Transnational Crime Division-CIDG, PNP PS/Supt. Gilbert C. Sosa, and Chief Criminal Investigation and Detection Division, PNP Atty. Benjamin Delos Santos.

This one-day seminar will be held on March 13, 2007 at Republic Flour Mills (RFM) Auditorium located at corner Sheridan and Pioneer Sts., Mandaluyong City. For more details, please call Marietta or Donna at 635-5929, 635-5985 or you may fax 634-7569 or email us at ctvai@truthverifier.com

CTVAI also offers in-house seminars. For more details please dial the aforementioned numbers.

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **WINTEX TEXTILES INDUSTRIES INC.** is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as **New Export Producer of Knitted Fabrics** with a capacity of 2,714,400 kgs/year on a **Non Pioneer Status** with project/plant site located at Lot 2 A Road, Dr. A. Natividad St. Napindan Taguig City.

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI—February 19, 2007)

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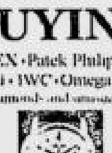

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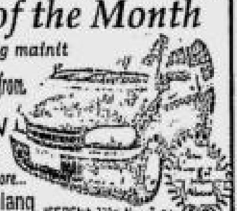

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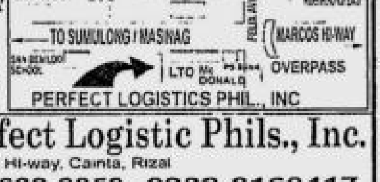

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 95-QUEZON CITY

IN THE MATTER OF TESTAMENTARY
ESTATE OF THE DECEASE JOSE B.
DIMSON,

SP. PROC. NO. Q-06-58529

ROBERT P. GARCIA,
Petitioner.
x--x

ORDER

Notice is hereby given to ROQUETA R. DIMSON and all her children residing at her last known address at No. 10 Magalang Street, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City and JUDITCH JOHNSON and her children residing at her last known address at Washington Drive, Sorsogon City to appear before this Court located at Rm. 202, 2nd Floor, Hall of Justice Building, Quezon City Hall Compound, Quezon City on February 22, 2007 at 8:30 o'clock in the morning and show cause why the petition filed by the petitioner for the allowance of a Holographic Will of deceased Jose B. Dimson dated April 7, 1993 shall not be granted. Otherwise, the Court will allow the petitioner and his counsel to present witnesses in support of the will.

SO ORDERED.

Quezon City, Philippines, January 19, 2007.

(Sgd.) HENRI JEAN-PAUL B. INTING
Presiding Judge

(PDI - Feb. 5, 12 & 19, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO. DC2007-02-0002

"Providing for the Rules and Regulations Governing the Business of Supplying, Hauling, Storage, Handling, Marketing and Distribution of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for Automotive Use"

WHEREAS, the Department of Energy (DOE) in pursuance of its powers and functions under Section 5 of Republic Act (RA) No. 7638 otherwise known as the "Department of Energy Act of 1992", establishes and administers programs for the exploration, transportation, marketing, distribution, utilization, conservation, stockpiling, and storage of energy resources of all forms, whether conventional or non-conventional;

WHEREAS, the DOE shall regulate private sector activities relative to energy projects in order to attain the goals embodied in Section 2 of RA 7638: *Provided*, that the Department shall endeavor to provide for an environment conducive to free and active private sector participation and investment in all energy activities;

WHEREAS, RA 8479, otherwise known as the "Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998", shall apply to all persons or entities engaged in any and all activities of the domestic downstream oil industry including the LPG business for automotive use, and mandates the DOE to promote the entry of new industry participants;

WHEREAS, Section 14(b) of RA 8479 empowers the DOE to monitor the refining and manufacturing of local petroleum products to ensure that clean and safe (environment and worker-benign) technologies are applied. The same shall also apply to the process of marketing local and imported petroleum products;

WHEREAS, Batas Pambansa Blg. 33, as amended by Presidential Decree No. 1865, and the Implementing Rules and Regulations therefore, define and penalize certain prohibited acts that are considered inimical to the public interest and national security, including illegal trading of petroleum and/or petroleum products, hoarding of petroleum products, adulteration and underdelivery, among others;

WHEREAS, the LPG Business for Automotive Use is subject to pertinent certifications, permits and licenses issued by government authorities such as, but not limited to, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Internal Revenue and Local Government Units;

WHEREAS, the downstream oil industry has adopted pertinent provisions of different national and international safety codes that cover the safe and proper handling, transport, storage, installation and use of equipment and facilities that are used in the industry;

WHEREAS, these pertinent provisions in the different national and international safety codes have been integrated and included in the National Standards on Health, Safety, and Quality for the petroleum products business;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to eliminate, illegal and unsafe operation of such business and to impose penalties on violations to health, safety and product quantity/quality standards in the industry in order to better protect the consuming public;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing premises, the following rules are hereby promulgated to govern the Business of LPG for Automotive Use.

Rule I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. TITLE

This Department Circular shall be known and cited as **"The Rules and Regulations Governing the Business of Supplying, Hauling, Storage, Handling, Marketing and Distribution of LPG for Automotive Use"** or **"Auto-LPG Rules"**.

SECTION 2. COVERAGE

This Auto-LPG Rules shall apply to any Person engaged or intending to engage in the business of supplying, hauling, storage, handling, marketing and distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for automotive use.

SECTION 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this Auto-LPG Rules, the following definitions shall apply:

a. ***"Auto-LPG Dispensing Station"*** shall refer to an outlet, facility, or business establishment which retails Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for automotive fuel directly to individual end users or to the motoring public; The same may be stand alone or located within or operated with an LPPs Retail Outlet;
b. ***"Auto LPG Industry Participants"*** shall refer to persons or entities engaged in the business of supplying, hauling, storage, handling, marketing and distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for automotive use.
c. ***"BFP"*** shall refer to the Bureau of Fire Protection created under Republic Act No. 6975 as amended;
d. ***"Bulk Supplier"*** shall refer to any person or entity who engages in the sale of LPG thru tankers, barges, tank trucks, trailers and lorries;
e. ***"Container"*** or ***"Auto-LPG Container"*** shall refer to any portable pressure vessel with all its permanent support(s) and attachment(s) installed, used for the storage of LPG for automotive use;
f. ***"DENR"*** shall refer to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, created under Executive Order No. 192;
g. ***"DILG"*** shall refer to the Department of Interior and Local Government, created under Republic Act No. 6975;
h. ***"DOE"*** shall refer to the Department of Energy, created under Republic Act No. 7638, as amended;
i. ***"DOST"*** shall refer to the Department of Science and Technology, created under Executive Order No. 128;
j. ***"DTI"*** shall refer to the Department of Trade and Industry, created under Executive Order No. 292;
k. ***"Hauler"*** shall refer to persons or entities engaged in the transport, distribution and carriage of LPG in bulk from the bulk supplier to the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station;
l. ***"LPP"*** shall refer to Liquid Petroleum Products such as gasoline, diesel, and kerosene;
m. ***"LGU"*** shall refer to the local government unit;
n. ***"OIMB"*** shall refer to the Oil Industry Management Bureau of the Department of Energy;
o. ***"PNP"*** shall refer to the Philippine National Police, created under Republic Act No. 6975;
p. ***"PNS" or Philippine National Standards"*** shall refer to the standards promulgated by the DTI-Bureau of Product Standards relating to product specifications, test methods, terminologies, and standardization procedures, guidelines or practices;
q. ***"Retailing"*** shall refer to the act of selling, distributing, dispensing, storing, handling, transferring or dispensing LPG for automotive use directly to the individual end users or to the motoring public.

Rule II
MINIMUM STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Section 4. SUPPLYING/HAULING IN BULK

Any person who is operating or intending to operate a LPG bulk supply and/or hauling business for automotive use shall comply with the latest edition of the following:

a. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Pamphlet 58 – *Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code;* and
b. Philippine LPG Association (PLPGA) Safety Code

Section 5. RETAILING

Any person who is operating or intending to operate an Auto-LPG Dispensing Station shall comply with the following requirements of this Auto-LPG Rules:

a. Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall conform to PNS/DOE FS 3:2006 and any amendments thereto.

   Pursuant to PNS/DOE FS 3:2006, the retailing of LPG for automotive use shall be conducted in a dedicated Auto-LPG business premises with an initial minimum lot area of 250 square meters for stand-alone stations with single Auto-LPG Dispenser and above ground storage *or* 150 square meters for stand-alone stations with single Auto-LPG Dispenser and underground storage; such that vehicles being serviced shall at all times be inside the said business premises.
b. Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall only refill LPG containers for automotive use which conform to the specifications of PNS 04:2006 "Road Vehicles – Automotive LPG Components – Containers" and installed in the vehicle complying with PNS 05:1983 "Code of Practice for the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) System in Internal Combustion Engines".
c. Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall not be allowed to refill cylinders for household use.
d. Operation of "self-serve" Auto-LPG Dispensing Station shall not be allowed.
e. Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall conform to the minimum standards and requirements prescribed hereunder, and such other pertinent rules and regulations, and shall operate only with a valid SCC as described in Section 6 hereof.

Section 6. STANDARDS COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE

The DOE, through the Oil Industry Management Bureau (OIMB), shall issue a Standards Compliance Certificate (SCC) upon the complete submission of and full compliance by the Auto-LPG Industry Participant with the requirements provided in Section 9 hereof: *Provided*, that the issuance of the said SCC does not exempt such person or entity from securing DOE's Certificate of Compliance (COC) for liquid fuels and any other permit or certificate of quality, health, safety, security, or environmental clearance from the concerned governmental agencies or instrumentalities: *Provided further*, that the Auto-LPG Industry Participant shall submit to the DOE-OIMB an authenticated copy of the business/mayor's permit within thirty (30) days from the issuance of the SCC, otherwise the latter shall be deemed revoked.

No Auto-LPG Industry Participant shall operate until an SCC is secured from the DOE-OIMB. The Auto-LPG Industry Participant shall be deemed engaged in the ILLEGAL TRADING of LPG for automotive use if he/she operates without the SCC.

Section 7. CERTIFICATE OF NON-COVERAGE

Auto-LPG garage-based operation shall not be covered by this Auto-LPG Rules only upon issuance of a Certificate of Non-Coverage (CNC) by the DOE-OIMB. For purposes of this Auto-LPG Rules, a garage-based operation shall refer to the operation of a motor vehicle fleet with at least thirty (30) vehicle units; parked and serviced in a confined area or garage.

A Certificate of Non-Coverage shall be issued provided that the owner / operator shall ensure that:

a. They file with the DOE-OIMB a duly acknowledged formal letter of request for a certificate of non-coverage under these Rules.
b. They present pertinent LTO/LTFRB documents confirming their fleet with at least thirty (30) taxi units in operation.
c. They do not render retailing services as defined and as provided for in Section 5 hereof.
d. Their dispenser/s does not have "money wheels" or "price indicators". For purposes of this Auto-LPG Rules, a "money wheel" is the price-indicating device of the LPG dispenser that indicates the amount corresponding to the volume of product dispensed from the nozzle.
e. Their facility shall not be open for retail to the motoring public, hence, shall only be accessible to its own fleet vehicles through a controlled entry point.

Bulk suppliers shall ensure that their garage-based Auto-LPG clients / buyers have secured the necessary Certificate of Non-Coverage (CNC) from the DOE prior to engaging into contractual obligations, such as but not limited to supply agreements, with their clients or buyers.

The CNC does not preclude compliance with PNS/DOE FS 3:2006 "Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations" and with the requirements of other government agencies.

SECTION 8. NON-ISSUANCE, NON-RENEWAL OR REVOCATION OF STANDARDS COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE

The following shall constitute grounds for non-issuance, non–renewal or revocation of SCC:

a. Failure to comply with Sections 9, 10, and 11 hereof;
b. Failure to present an authenticated Business/Mayor's permit as prescribed in Section 6 hereof;
c. Unjustified refusal to allow entry of authorized DOE-OIMB inspectors during inspections;
d. Failure to pay fines imposed by the DOE-OIMB;
e. Violation of these rules; and
f. Failure to submit, show or present proof, papers or documents evidencing compliance with any requirement, existing laws, rules and regulations governing the Auto LPG Industry or any other related law.

Section 9. DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS

No person or entity shall engage in the business of LPG for Automotive Use without first notifying the DOE-OIMB in writing his/her intention to engage in such activity and without first complying with the DOE requirements, including submission of documentary requirements. Such notification and documentary requirements shall be distinct and separate from the submissions relating to the other LPG and/or Liquid Petroleum Products activity and shall contain the following, *as applicable*:

a. Prior to Engagement in Auto-LPG Business:
   - i.) Business name, address, telephone/fax number of the business office;
   - ii.) Proposed location and complete address of Auto-LPG Dispensing Station;
   - iii.) Project or business plan indicating the scope of operation/activity; and
   - iv.) List of facilities and proof of availability of such facilities to support the proposed business.

b. Prior to Commencement of Construction:
   - i.) Department of Trade and Industry / Securities and Exchange Commission registration;
   - ii.) Environmental Compliance Certificate or applicable certificate/permits/ licenses issued by the DENR-EMB or LLDA;
   - iii.) Zoning/Locational Clearance;
   - iv.) Building Permit; and
   - v.) Barangay Clearance for the proposed location.

c. Prior to Operation:
   - i.) File a notice to the OIMB of their official start of business at least five (5) days prior to the start of actual operations;
   - ii.) Current Fire Safety Inspection Certificate (BFP);
   - iii.) PNS Compliance Statement for Facility Design and Operation;
   - iv.) List of Auto-LPG station personnel and proof of training and qualification;
   - v.) List of dispensers, storage tanks, and bullet trucks/lorries with its corresponding Certificate of Approval or any other similar documents as provided by the equipment supplier/ manufacturer; and
   - vi.) Engineering layout plan and latest photograph of the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station. Such lay-out plan duly signed by a company designated project engineer shall indicate the following information, among others:
     - a. Number of tanks and type of installation;
     - b. Location and distances between building structures and facilities and equipment;
     - c. Ingress and Egress;
     - d. Perimeter wall / property boundaries; and
     - e. Location and identification of dispensing unit/s including hose reach zone.
     - d. Other requirements or information as may be required by the DOE-OIMB, such as, but not limited to, change of dealership or business name, expansion of LPG activity and temporary or permanent closure.

Unless explicitly specified, certifications, permits and licenses for LPPs cannot be considered in compliance to the above requirements for Auto LPG Dispensing Stations.

The documents enumerated in this Section must be accompanied by original documents for authentication purposes.

Section 10. REPORTORIAL REQUIREMENTS

All businesses engaged in the trade of LPG, such as but not limited to, Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall be required to submit the following reports:

a. For Bulk Suppliers and/or Haulers
   - i. List of Auto-LPG buyers/clients such as, but not limited to, taxi companies, garage-based, fleet operators by company/entity and location;
   - ii. Quarterly report of sales to buyers/clients as specified in item (a.i) above;
   - iii. List/number of LPG tankers, barges, tank trucks, trailers and lorries including its load capacities; and
   - iv. List of certified personnel.

b. For Auto-LPG Dispensing Station:
   - i. Quarterly Sales and Purchase Volume;
   - ii. Applicable permits for any new, additional, renovated or refurbished facilities and / or changes in their respective operation within five (5) days prior to commissioning or decommissioning, as the case may be; and
   - iii. List of qualified station personnel / attendant as provided for in Section 9(c) of this Rules.

Section 11. CODE OF PRACTICE

In order to ensure the safe operation in the auto LPG business, the following operational guidelines and procedures shall be strictly observed at all times:

a. *For Bulk Suppliers and/or Haulers:*

   Compliance to pertinent provisions of Section 3 (LPG Bulk Storage Facilities) and Section 4 (Vehicular Transport of LPG) of the PLPGA Safety Code of 2000.

b. *For Auto-LPG Dispensing Station Owner/Operator:*
   - i. Ensure that the emergency shut off valves for the dispensing unit and for the LPG storage tanks as provided under PNS/DOE FS 3:2006 are complied with and are fully operational.
   - ii. Ensure that its personnel shall have undergone, as a minimum requirement, training and qualification conducted by the Philippine LPG Association (PLPGA) for the proper handling and retailing of Auto-LPG. Such proof of training shall be submitted to the DOE-OIMB prior to its initial operation and subsequent renewal of SCC. The same shall be made available upon demand by the DOE during inspection.
   - iii. Ensure that only certified station personnel are allowed to dispense Auto-LPG with strict observance of the following:
     - 1) Familiar with and knowledgeable of the emergency shutdown procedures observed by the auto-LPG dispensing station;
     - 2) Compliance to pertinent provisions of Section on Consumer Safety and Informational Signs;
     - 3) Only fixed and vehicle-mounted LPG containers are permitted for filling at LPG Stations. LPG cylinders for household use shall not be allowed for refill in a Auto-LPG Dispensing Station;
     - 4) Display of the PS/Global Check mark or the equivalent Import commodity clearance (ICC) mark on LPG container and container name plate which indicates, among others, its manufacturing / re-qualification / retest date, as the case may be;
     - 5) The Auto-LPG container, including its attachments, is adequately protected from damage by impact from objects being handled or carried by the vehicle; and
     - 6) The remote fill valve is located outside the container / baggage compartment and an appropriate external filler cap is provided.
   - iv. A dedicated 9.1 kg. BC rated BPS certified fire extinguisher shall readily be accessible within the dispensing area.
   - v. No part of the vehicle being filled shall be in a public place. For this purpose, a "public place" shall refer to sidewalks, streets, or public parking.
   - vi. The following shall not be within the hose reach zone of the dispenser:
     - 1) Public place;
     - 2) Protected place e.g. place of worship, school, hospital, theater or any building or open area in which persons are accustomed to assemble in large numbers;
     - 3) An entry into a building;
     - 4) A pit or opening into a close drain; and
     - 5) Basement or an aboveground tank for flammable liquid.
   - vii. The LPG tank truck entry and exit driveways should be located in such a manner that ensures that the tank truck has ready access to the site so as to reduce the time it may need to be exposed to traffic while entering or leaving the site.
   - viii. The LPG tank truck unloading position shall be such that the LPG tank truck is positioned wholly within the site during unloading.
   - ix. The unloading of an LPG tank truck shall only proceed when the exit is not obstructed and it is positioned in such a manner that it can leave the site without recourse to reversing.
   - x. Vehicles shall be prevented from driving over the filling hose if the LPG tank truck parking area is away from the fill point.

Section 12. CONSUMER SAFETY AND INFORMATIONAL SIGNS

The following signs shall be prominently displayed by the owner and/or operator of the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station in strategic and appropriate locations within the premises of the said outlet for the awareness and information of the buying public and station personnel:

a. Appropriately filled-up price display board indicating the updated price of the LPG product dispensed at the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station: Provided that the numeric entries shall be light blue in color and at least six (6) inches in height;
b. Switching off of cellular phones and other electronic devices while filling;
c. No smoking;
d. Switching off of engines while filling; and
e. Other safety signs as may be required by the DOE, other government agencies and concerned LGUs.

Failure to provide and display any of the above-mentioned requirements shall subject the owner or operator of the station to the fine or sanction provided in Section 22 of these Rules.

Section 13. ISSUANCE OF RECEIPTS

All transactions involving the LPG Business for Automotive Use must be evidenced by an official receipt bearing the registered name and address of the seller and indicating the quantity and price of the LPG product sold, the date of the transaction and such other information required by existing laws and rules on national internal revenue (or those implemented by the Bureau of Intenal Revenue). Duplicate copies of official receipts shall be made available for verification by DOE-OIMB inspectors/personnel.

Rule III
LPG DISPENSER CALIBRATION AND SEALING

Section 14. IN-SERVICE CALIBRATION AND SEALING OF LPG DISPENSERS

All LPG dispensers shall be calibrated quarterly or as often as possible or as deemed necessary by the calibrating entity. A dispenser that is not calibrated and sealed or goes off-calibration shall be clearly marked with an "*out of order*" sign and shall not be used until the said dispenser is calibrated and resealed by the authorized calibrating entity.

For the purpose of this Auto LPG Rules, the authorized calibrating entity is the Municipal or City Treasurer or, in its absence or incapacity, the DOST-ITDI, or, in its absence or unavailability, any other government agency authorized therefore or, in its absence, the representative of the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station's bulk supplier duly authorized by the concerned LGU.

The owner / operator shall maintain an updated record of calibration and shall be made available upon demand by the DOE-OIMB inspectors.

Failure to provide the updated record of calibrations or properly sealed dispensing pumps shall give rise to the presumption that the Auto LPG dispenser is UNDERDELIVERING.

RULE IV
PETROLEUM PRODUCT STANDARDS

Section 15. PRODUCT QUALITY

Only LPG products for automotive use and complying with the Philippine National Standards PNS/DOE QS 005:2005, specifically Type 2B Propane Butane (C3-C4 Mixture) for Motor Fuels, shall be dispensed at the Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations.

The bulk supplier shall provide a Certificate of Quality (COQ) for such LPG products to the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station and shall be made available at all times for inspection.

Section 16. PRODUCT SAMPLING AND TESTING OF AUTO-LPG DISPENSING PUMPS

Duly authorized inspectors from the DOE-OIMB shall undertake random and unannounced inspections in the presence of the owner and/or operator of the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station or his duly authorized representative to conduct, among others, sample taking and testing of Auto-LPG dispensing pumps. The owner and/or operator of the Auto-LPG Station, or his/her duly authorized representative, shall allow said inspectors to inspect the Station and cooperate with them fully.

The owner and/or operator or his/her duly authorized representative shall allow the duly authorized DOE-OIMB inspectors to take samples of Auto-LPG which they are offering for sale, in volumes as required by DOE Issuances and Circulars on sample taking and as reflected in the Special Assignment covering the said inspection, for on-site product testing or quality tests at the DOE laboratory.

The Auto-LPG Dispensing Station shall retain a duplicate set of the samples obtained by the OIMB inspectors during the inspection and product quality verification.

Rule V
PROHIBITED ACTS

Section 17. ILLEGAL TRADING

The Owner or operator shall be deemed engaged in ILLEGAL TRADING under any of the following circumstances:

a. Engaging in business without Standards Compliance Certificate;
b. Non-issuance of receipts;
c. Dispensing of LPG into household cylinders;
d. Selling of Adulterated LPG for automotive use; and
e. For bulk-suppliers, selling Auto-LPG to LPG Stations without SCC and to garage-based operators without DOE Certificate of Non-Coverage.

Section 18. REFUSAL TO ALLOW INSPECTION

The refusal to allow access or entry of authorized DOE - OIMB inspectors to the Auto-LPG Dispensing Station and/or to conduct the actual inspection and product sampling is prohibited and shall constitute *prima facie* evidence of ILLEGAL TRADING and shall be subject to the penalty provided in Section 22 hereof.

Section 19. UNDERDELIVERING

The quantity of LPG products for automotive use delivered by the LPG dispensers at the Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations shall be within the maximum permissible error (MPE) of +/- 1%.

Dispensers delivering more than the MPEs shall be deemed to be UNDERDELIVERING. The absence of an "out-of-order" sign or padlock, locking the dispenser shall be deemed an actual use for the conduct of retailing. A dispenser found with a broken or no seal shall be immediately padlocked by the DOE-OIMB and shall be subject to applicable penalties under Section 22 hereof.

Section 20. HOARDING

For purposes of this Auto LPG Rules, the following shall constitute *prima facie* evidence of HOARDING:

a. The refusal of Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations to sell LPG products for automotive use shortly before a price increase or in times of tight supply, and in both instances if the buyer or consumer has the ability to pay in cash for the product; or
b. The undue accumulation of Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations of LPG products for automotive use in times of tight supply or shortly before a price increase. For purposes of this Auto LPG Rules, "undue accumulation" shall mean the keeping or stocking of quantities of LPG products for automotive use beyond the inventory levels as required to be maintained by the Auto-LPG Dispensing Stations, for a period of thirty (30) days immediately preceding the period of tight supply or price increase.

Section 21. ADULTERATION

The possession of LPG products for automotive use, which do not meet the prescribed PNS, shall constitute *prima facie* evidence of ADULTERATION, and the distribution or transportation of the said LPG product for purposes of sale, exchange or barter of adulterated products shall constitute ILLEGAL TRADING.

RULE VI
ADMINISTRATIVE FINES AND SANCTIONS

Section 22. FINES/SANCTIONS AGAINST PROHIBITED ACTS

Any Person engaged in the LPG Business for Automotive Use who commits any of the prohibited acts defined or provided in this Department Circular such as ILLEGAL TRADING, ADULTERATION, UNDERDELIVERY, HOARDING, refusal of inspection and violation of the other provisions of this Department Circular shall be imposed for the first offense, a fine of ***Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00)*** for every prohibited act. An additional fine of ***Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00)*** shall be imposed against such Person in the event the latter is found to have committed the same prohibited act a second time. Commission of the same offense a third time, by the same person shall mean cancellation or revocation of its SCC by the DOE.

Any person found operating without an SCC, the DOE shall cause the immediate cessation or suspension of the operation of the station and impose a fine of ***Sixty Thousand Pesos (P60,000.00)*** against the owner or operator. No SCC shall be granted or issued unless said fines are paid and after full compliance with the requirements of Section 6 hereof.

Section 23. REFUSAL OR FAILURE TO PAY FINE

The DOE-OIMB shall cause the immediate cessation or suspension of the operation or cancellation of the SCC of the owner / operator who refuses or fails to pay any administrative fine without prejudice to the filing of an appropriate criminal action if warranted.

Section 24. INITIATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS

Any Person may initiate administrative proceedings against Persons committing any of the prohibited acts defined or provided in this Rules in accordance with Department Circular No. 2002-07-004 ("Rules of Practice and Procedure Before the Department of Energy"); provided that, the DOE may *motu propio* proceed administratively against any Person who violates or does not comply with this Auto-LPG Rules pursuant to the said Department Circular No. 2002-07-004.

Section 25. INITIATION OF CRIMINAL ACTS

The initiation of an administrative action and/or the imposition of any fine against any Person who violates or does not comply with this Rule shall be without prejudice to the filing of any criminal action against such person pursuant to Batas Pambansa Blg. 33, as amended and R.A. 8479.

RULE VII
FINAL PROVISIONS

Section 26. TRANSITION PERIOD

All Persons engaged in the LPG business for automotive use that have fully complied with the prior notice requirements of the DOE pursuant to Department Circular No. 98-03-004 shall be given three (3) months from effectivity of this Auto LPG Rules to fully comply with the provisions hereof: Provided, that all persons intending to engage in Auto-LPG Business for Automotive use shall immediately comply with this Rules.

Section 27. REPEALING CLAUSE

All other DOE issuances and Circulars not consistent with this Auto LPG Rules are hereby repealed or amended accordingly upon the effectivity of this Rules.

Section 28. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision herein be declared invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions not so declared.

Section 29. EFFECTIVITY

This Department Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of its complete publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. February 13, 2007.

RAPHAEL P.M. LOTILLA
Secretary

(PDI–February 19, 2007)

Panasonic, Imax prime up for bigger movie thrills

PANASONIC AND IMAX SET OFF continuous plans to further spawn larger-than-life movie experiences for Filipinos nationwide after the big success of the Imax theater launch at the SM Mall of Asia last year.

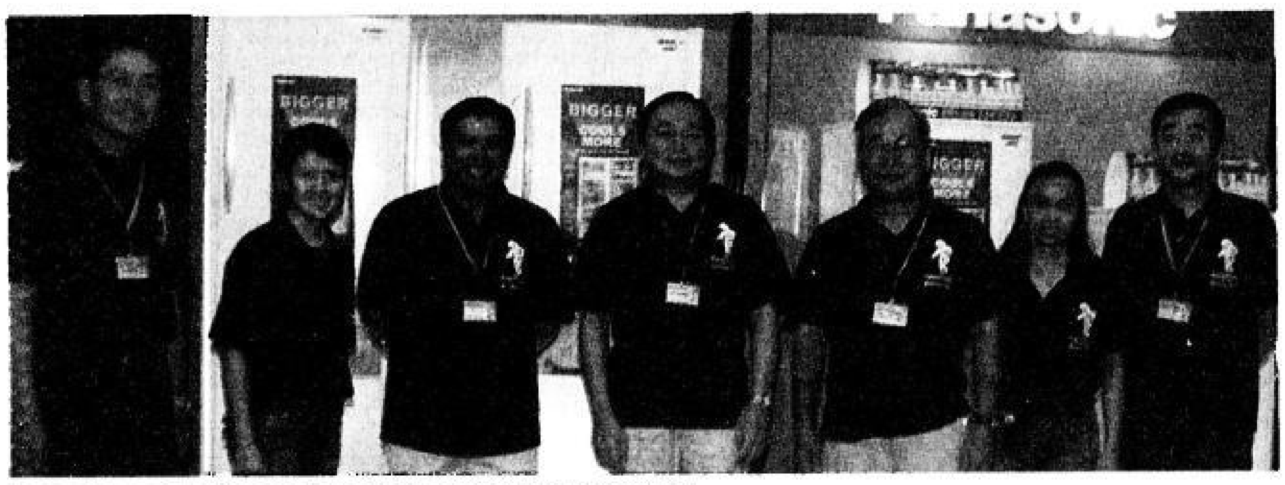
As the official home entertainment partner of the largest movie screen attraction in the world, Panasonic's array of the latest state-of-the-art technology and audio-visual products add up to the most satisfying movie-going adventure to date. Spiderman III and Harry Potter aficionados can soon live through life-like movie experiences as the overpowering Imax technology takes on much more exciting, action-packed and suspense-filled films to feature to satiate a Pinoy moviegoer's delight.

Imax's most unique film format, projection technology and theater designs with the most unsurpassed sharpness and clarity, not to mention being the largest 3D screen in the world, brings about the latest sensation that constantly enthralls millions of viewers worldwide. With the same goals, Panasonic president Rene T. Almeda is confident about the astounding partnership with Imax, which he coined as the "Mount Everest" of mainstream theater viewing. Through the collaboration, Panasonic showcases its top-of-the-line products and breakthrough innovations such as Viera plasma TVs and LCD TVs, among others, that can deliver ultimate home theater experience among movie enthusiasts.

Almeda believes that "Panasonic and Imax complement each other because of its superiority and leadership in their respective fields", eventually fulfilling their common aspirations of taking the new generation to the latest and most exciting adventures.

The Imax Theatre at the Mall of Asia is undoubtedly a mammoth achievement in the realm of commercial viewing, with crystal-clear images as big as an eight-story building and wraparound digital sound emanating from 44 sub-bass speakers for 12,000 watts of power. With Panasonic's compelling alliance, movie aficionados can take a quick preview of the great experiences happening inside the theater through several Panasonic Viera plasma TV screens at the Imax theater lobby. Almeda also said that Panasonic has started giving out exclusive privileges at the Imax theater to its customers like free Imax movie tickets for every purchase of Viera Flat Panel TVs and Lumix Cameras.

Panasonic, as one of the premier leaders in the home entertainment business, proves its unwavering quest to provide outstanding, world-class and cutting-edge products to the country through strong collaborations with the very best in the industry. Its sincere and sustained pursuit of product excellence and commitment of service to society brings further unrelenting growth and convenience in the fast-paced dynamics of the contemporary world.



BIGGER, COOLER SURPRISES FROM PANASONIC

Keeping products cool more than anyone can imagine, the new Panasonic freezer-now bigger and wider, is the most efficient upright freezer in the market through its all roll-bond evaporator shelves. With this technology, Panasonic has the leading and most freezing capability amongst others. Shown presenting this newest addition to its freezer lineups are (from left): Mike Castro, general manager, refrigerator division, Panasonic Manufacturing Philippines Corp; Odessa Osorio, category manager, home appliances, Panasonic Philippines; Rene Almeda, president, Panasonic Philippines; Seiichi Fukami, president, Panasonic Manufacturing Philippines Corp; Tomio Kawabe, director, Matsushita Electric Industrial Headquarters; Ellen Suarez, marketing department manager; and Hiroyuki Iwaki, sales and marketing director, Panasonic Philippines.

PMA awards budding marketing professionals through Agora Youth

IT IS ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR THE 2007 Agora Youth Awards slated on Feb. 26. Philippine Marketing Association, the country's premiere marketing organization founded in 1954, is once again bound to recognize the potentials lying within every marketing student in an event aimed at inspiring them to leap over hurdles and surpass the benchmark in marketing excellence this early in their lives.

Over the years, Agora Youth, which was formerly called Ten Outstanding Marketing Students and Three Outstanding Marketing Associations, or Tomas-Tosma Awards, has been honoring deserving young individuals who have significantly high potentials in making a difference in the marketing scene. Today, its awardees are proving that they are indeed worthy of such recognition.

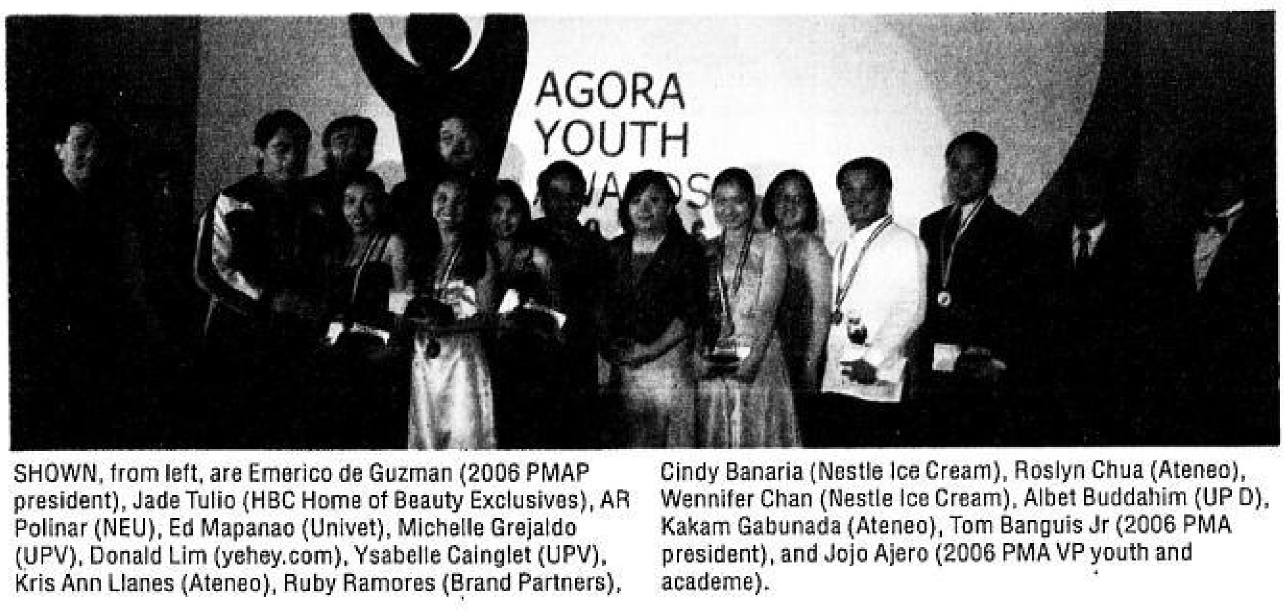
Among them is Cocolife's vice president and Luzon region head Marco Antonio Montes who claims that the award made him accomplish some of his dreams and that "it motivated him to aspire and accomplish more." Today, he hopes to be actively involved in various marketing activities of Cocolife so that he may inspire the company's associates and employees and provide a better service to policyholders.

Sun Cellullar's trade marketing manager, Rhycel Marcelo, who was an awardee in 1996, admits that it was the awards that gave weight to her credentials when she was still a fresh graduate applying for a job. In fact, it had helped her easily earn the respect of both her colleagues and superiors, as winning the award in itself is a prestige that she can carry all her life.

"Agora Youth Awardees are not only employed in top companies but are also doing remarkably well in their own careers," Faith Abano, PMA's vice president for youth and academe, said.

Derived from the Greek word for marketplace, Agora Youth is a manifestation of the organization's commitment to pursue projects that will promote the excellence of the marketing profession.

More than the lifetime honor of hoarding an Agora Youth award, the winners of this year's search will also get insurance coverage from Philam-Life. Other sponsors include: La Corona, which will accommodate all provincial finalists, HBC, Bobson Jeans, Chowking and San Miguel Corp.

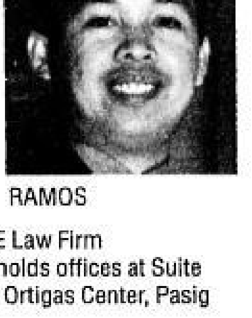


SHOWN, from left, are Emerico de Guzman (2006 PMAP president), Jade Tulio (HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives), AR Polinar (NEU), Ed Mapanao (Univet), Michelle Grejaldo (UPV), Donald Lim (yehey.com), Ysabelle Cainglet (UPV), Kris Ann Llanes (Ateneo), Ruby Ramores (Brand Partners), Cindy Banaria (Nestle Ice Cream), Roslyn Chua (Ateneo), Wennifer Chan (Nestle Ice Cream), Albet Buddahim (UP D), Kakam Gabunada (Ateneo), Tom Banguis Jr (2006 PMA president), and Jojo Ajero (2006 PMA VP youth and academe).

GSE LAW FIRM NAMES NEW SENIOR ASSOCIATES

The Gerodias Suchianco Estrella (GSE) Law Firm announces the promotion to senior associate of Grace Patricia Vilchez-Custodio and Jose 'Joey' A. Ramos Jr effective Jan. 1. Grace and Joey obtained their undergraduate (Bachelor of Science, Major in Legal Management and Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, respectively) in 1996 and Juris Doctor degrees in 2000 from the Ateneo de Manila University. Both were admitted to the Philippine Bar in 2001. Grace actively handles corporate, intellectual property, real estate transactions, taxation and estate planning referrals. Joey has been advising and representing a wide array of clients, including leading Philippine and multinational corporations in all kinds of labor disputes. He also handles commercial, civil, criminal and family law cases. GSE Law Firm (www.GSElawfirm.com) holds offices at Suite 2404 Discovery Center in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

VILCHEZ-CUSTODIO



RAMOS

DTI extends deadline

THE DEPARTMENT OF Trade and Industry announced that all business name registrations expiring from Jan. 24 to Feb. 28 shall remain valid until March 31. For further inquiry or information on how to register a business name, call DTI direct at 751-3330 or log on to www.business.gov.ph.

Innove, Ayala Land create communities together

INNOVE COMMUNICATIONS AND AYALA Land are working together to create the idyllic communities required by today's families and individuals.

The partnership between the two companies has lasted for years now, with Innove providing communications solutions to the different developments of Ayala Land—from its Ayala Land Premier, to Community Innovations to Avida as well as its subsidiary Cebu Holdings Inc including its developments in Bonifacio Global City.

Innove has provided Ayala Land's various residential and commercial development with voice and data services, particularly Globe Broadband, domestic leased lines, GlobeQuest Store Express and Wi-Fi.

Being the best in their fields, the relationship between Innove and Ayala Land continues to grow leading to further business collaboration which translates to enhanced offerings for consumers in the country. An exclusive gathering was held recently in Abe at Serendra to celebrate the continued partnership as well as the common visions shared by the two companies.

Among the 22 development projects that Innove has already completed are Avida Towers Sucat, Santa Rosa Estates, San Antonio Heights 1 & 2, Ayala Alabang Village, Tamarind Cove, The Legacy at Montgomery Place, Ayala Southvale Village Phase 1, Ayala North Point, Ayala Westgrove Heights Phase 1 to 5, Bonifacio Ridge, One Legazpi Park, One Roxas Triangle, One Salcedo Place, Verdana Homes in Bacoor, The Asia Tower, The Regency at Salcedo, Three Salcedo Place, Two Salcedo Place, Ayala Heights Cebu, The Columns Ayala Avenue Towers 1 & 2, Greenbelt and Glorietta.

Innove's ongoing projects are San Antonio Heights 3, Anvaya Cove, Serendra, Sonera, The Columns Ayala Avenue Tower 3, Plantazione Verdana in Bacolod and TriNoma. The company will also provide connectivity to Ayala Land's 33 other development projects soon.

FROM left: Innove CEO Gil Genio, Ayala Land Premier EVP Bobby Dy, and Globe president and CEO Gerry Ablaza.

FROM left: Ayala Land SVP Angela De Villa-Lacson, Innove business development head Jessie Alano, and executive vice president and head of Ayala Malls Group Miriam Katigbak.

Touching lives with life insurance

SIGNING A LIFE INSURANCE CONTRACT may seem like nothing less than *harang*. After all, how could anyone put a price on life? However, a life insurance agent's role doesn't begin and end with a contract. In fact, agents only get paid for how many long-term clients they have. This isn't easy to accomplish, and the only way to do it is by building a trusting relationship with other people.

People who have spent a long time in the life insurance sector know that, like all meaningful partnerships, an insurance provider's relationship with a client grows and endures far beyond that last "goodbye." They address each of their clients in the strictest confidentiality, with the same tactful respect and deference one would expect from a family physician.

FROM LEFT, Lorna Lao, Josie Gotohio and Tessie Perez

Caring beyond 'goodbye'

"My husband Mario left us with the hope that our family would never be alone, and he made sure of this," recalls Carmen Robles of her husband Mario, a hardworking businessman who was also a deeply spiritual family man.

Mario had signed on for a life insurance policy with for First Guarantee Life Assurance Co Inc. (1st Life). When he passed away, Carmen found an unexpected source of strength in 1st Life's caring assistance. "My children and I feel that we are now members of a much bigger family, one that cares for and protects us just like Mario used to do," she says.

Making a difference

For the people at 1st Life, Carmen's story is one of the many reasons why a growing number of insurance agents see their work as one of the most rewarding vocations in the world.

Tessie Perez, for example, was a retired mother doing charity work at her local church when she decided to try going into life insurance. She says that being in life insurance has empowered her to help people in ways that she never thought possible.

Tessie recalls how one client's family came to her and thanked her for helping them in their time of need. "The claim helped see a daughter through school. Today, she's a successful executive in a computer company," she recounts.

Putting people first

The insurance business has not only helped Lorna Lao, a management trainee at 1st Life, to meet new people but also gives her a chance to actually make a difference in others' lives. Once, when she learned that a client was in need of a blood transfusion, she went out of her way to secure a doctor and find potential donors.

Lorna says that she is always deeply moved by her clients' show of faith in her, and hopes she can return the favor. "I deeply appreciate their trust and I try to help whenever I can," she says.

Bearing a cross each day

For Josie Gotohio, who slowly rose from the ranks to become 1st Life's Pasig branch manager, the emotional and spiritual benefits of life insurance far outweigh its monetary returns.

"What we do goes well above and beyond a usual workday. Helping people during what is most likely the most trying time of their lives is all just part of a day's work," she says.

ARKONG BATO COMMUNITY

UNILAB GIVES FREE HEALTH INSURANCE TO GK VILLAGE

The country's largest and leading pharmaceutical and healthcare company United Laboratories Inc (Unilab) recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Gawad Kalinga (GK) for the free one-year Philhealth Insurance coverage of some 83 residents at the Unilab GK Village in Arkong Bato, Barangay Kapitolyo, Pasig City. The signing was made after Unilab's turnover of the completed 60 houses which Unilab donated in 2005. All in all, Unilab has built 93 houses in Arkong Bato, including a three-story multipurpose hall now used as a classroom, library and computer room, and administrative office. Shown are (3rd from right, front row) Unilab corporate vice president for ethical marketing Sonnie Co and Therapharma general manager John Dumpit turning over the ceremonial key to Arkong Bato families led by GK Health Foundation head Dr. Joe Yamamoto (2nd from right, front row).

"And what is to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides,
that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?
Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.
And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall claim your limbs,
then shall you truly Dance."

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

JOSE MEDINA CLAPAROLS, JR.

September 13, 1955 – February 17, 2007

His loving wife **Geraldine Padua**; children **Jose Jaime**, **John Paul** and **Antonio Miguel**; brothers **Ricardo** and **Julie**, **Antonio** and **Vicky**, (children of Antonio & Vicky – Aldo, Andres and Olivia) **Javier**, **Philippe**, (children of Philippe – Joey and Jacques) relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His cremated remains lie in state at Capilla dela Virgen at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City, and daily masses will be at 7:00 p.m.

Burial Mass will be on Wednesday, February 21, 2007, 10:00 a.m. at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.
His love is everlasting."

Our Dearest Papa,

Joaquin "Aquin" Santos Sumpaico Sr.

of Mercado, Hagonoy, Bulacan
UST College of Medicine Class of 1937

has gone home to his Creator on February 17, 2007 at the age of 94.
His was a life of committed and loving service.

We, his family,
loving wife, **Luming (†)**
Reddie and Sandy, Carlo, Lissa, Ninin
Jojo and Ditsy, Tippy & Obet, Sam, Riel and Iguel, Fr. Jonjee SJ,
Jaypee & Odette, Jong
Fr. Lennie SJ
Mimi and Bits, Tuton, Ayen, Cissy, Lara
Didit
give thanks to our Lord for Papa's gift of LIFE.

His remains are waked at the Resurrection Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (Claret) in Teacher's Village and will be transferred for interment to Bulacan, Bulacan on Wednesday, February 21, 2007 after the 7:00 a.m. Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the S&W KALINGA FOUNDATION INC., a non-profit foundation helping in the formation of future priests will be appreciated.

"*MAMA, you will forever be in our hearts*"

In Loving Memory
on the First Death Anniversary of

SEGUNDA MARCELO CUEVAS

July 10, 1917 - February 19, 2006.

*A year ago, **MAMA** left us to join **DADDY** in the blissful company of our **CREATOR**. Although there was pain in the separation, there is consolation in the hope that she is finally home.*

Gregorian Masses are being offered for her at Sto. Domingo Church every 5:45 a.m. (conventual mass) for the month of February. Some of the masses for her intention shall be at the following churches:

Manila Metropolitan Cathedral	12:10 p.m.
San Agustin Chrurch	7:00 a.m.
National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes	All Masses for February
Mt. Carmel Church	6:00 a.m.
Sanctuario de San Antonio	6:00 p.m.
Mary the Queen Church	6:00 p.m.
Family Mausoleum	9:00 a.m.

The family would like to request relatives, friends and the pious readers to pray that **GOD** may grant **MAMA** eternal happiness in Heaven.

PROF. FLORA MERCADO HIZON

of Apalit, Pampanga and Quezon City

Peacefully joined our Lord and her departed parents, **Abelardo** and **Graciana**; departed brothers and sisters – **Fernando, Ricardo, Virgilio, Arturo, Benjamin, Gloria, Estrella** and **Perla** on February 16, 2007 at the age of 79.

Her in-laws **Julian Villareal (†)**, **Daniel Cruz Sr.**, **Katrina Pangilinan-Hizon**, **Aquilina Alberto-Hizon**; nephews, nieces and their children, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lies in state at Chapel 12-A, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City starting Monday, February 19, 2007.

Interment will be announced later.

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CLASSIFIEDS

BP awareness campaign launched

A TOTAL OF 101,340 PARTICIPANTS from key cities across the nation participated in the nationwide blood pressure screening dubbed "Presyon Ko Alam Ko, Presyon Ko Alaga Ko" last Feb. 11. Spearheaded by the Philippine Heart Association (PHA), in collaboration with the Vice Mayors League of the Philippines and the Therapharma division of Unilab, the campaign primarily aimed to raise the awareness of Filipinos on the importance of monitoring one's blood pressure.

The massive turnout made the event the biggest BP screening held in the country and is believed to be the biggest ever BP screening in the Asia-Pacific region. The current world record in the Guinness Book is held by United Kingdom with a total of 127,573 individuals participating in the event.

From 7 a.m. to 12 noon, participants from the 400 identified sites nationwide gathered to the nearest blood pressure screening site to have their BP checked. Close to 5,000 health personnel were trained by PHA members nationwide on the proper technique to check the blood pressure. The city hall of Mandaluyong served as the main satellite of the event in Metro Manila. Hyping the BP awareness campaign was Kapitan Presyon, the official campaign mascot and the newest ally of patients in fighting hypertension.

PHA vice-president and Heart Month 2007 chair Dr. Efren Vicaldo urged the public to make the fight against hypertension a top priority. Vicaldo and the other PHA officers emphasized that complications of high blood pressure can be prevented if the BP is adequately controlled. He also stressed the importance of screening one's blood pressure in detecting hypertensive patients who have no symptoms. Studies show that the majority of hypertensive patients are perfectly asymptomatic and the presence of symptoms may already reflect significant damage to the vital organs such as the heart, kidney and the brain.

According to a study conducted by the PHA, cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the top causes of death in the country, with hypertension as one of the primary causes of CVD. The alarming fact is that the number of possible hypertensives rises yearly, with an estimated 7 million Filipinos already affected by it. Regular monitoring of one's BP can help prevent heart diseases and could help stem the tide of the CVD menace.

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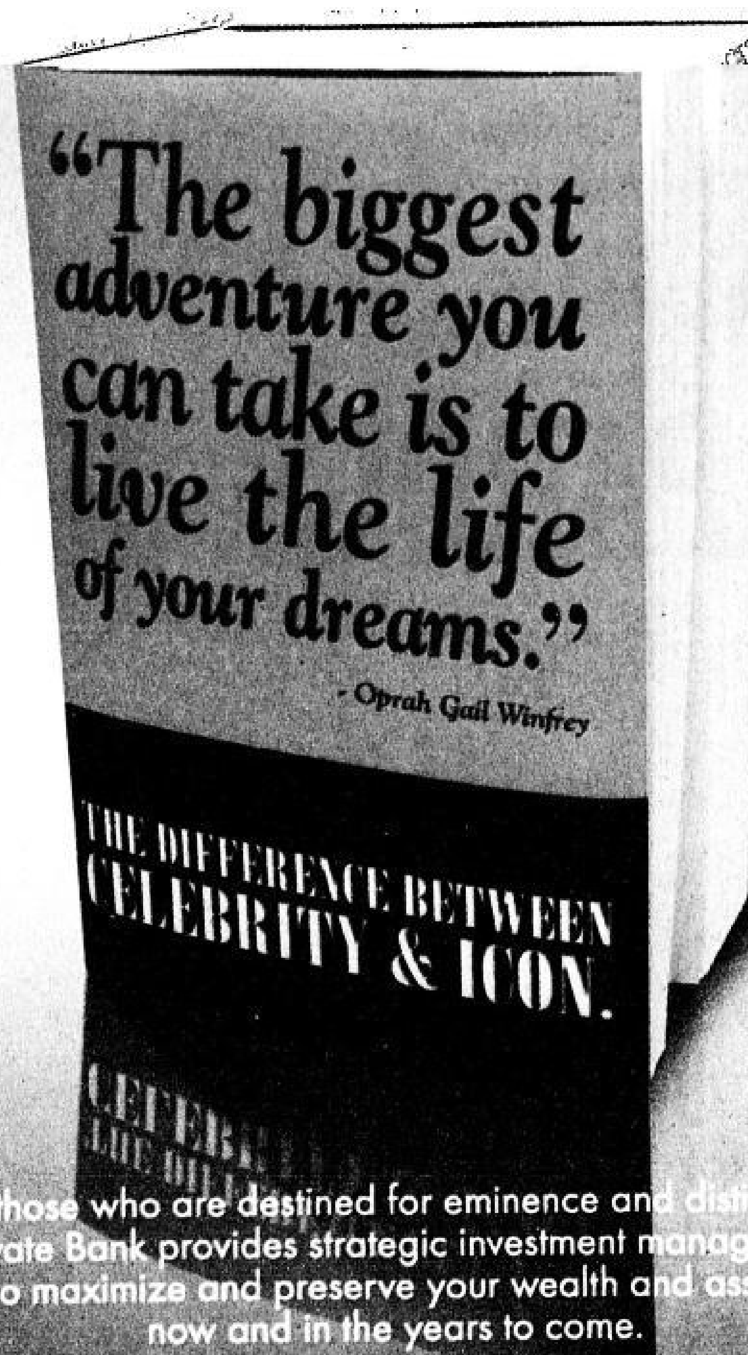
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- Oprah Gail Winfrey
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BUSINESS

'06 VAT collection fell below target

Value-added tax take hit ₱139.9B, BIR registered ₱5-B shortfall

By Michelle V. Remo

VALUE-ADDED TAX COLLECTED BY THE BUreau of Internal Revenue in 2006 fell short of the government's official target, with tax personnel blaming lower-than-expected growth of the economy for their performance.

A document from the BIR showed that the VAT collection reached P139.9 billion last year, about P5 billion lower than the goal of P145.3 billion set by the government.

But if compared to the 2005 VAT collection of only P87.85 billion, last year's collection marked a P52-billion, or 59-percent, increase.

Some analysts cite inefficiency in tax administration as the reason for the shortfall in the VAT collection, which pulled down the BIR's total tax take in 2006. Weak procedures in tax collection and embedded corruption are said to result in substantial revenue leakages.

But tax officials argued that the target set by the government was too high, given that the macroeconomic assumptions considered in the setting of the goal were not realized.

Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag earlier said that VAT collection highly depended on the country's economic growth. Because the economy fell short of expectations last year, even if it were only by a slight margin, falling short of the VAT collection target would be a natural consequence, he said.

The country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 5.4 percent in 2006 from the previous year. This was a percentage point lower than the least of the government target that ranged between 5.5 and 6.1 percent.

GDP is the value of all goods and services produced within an economy in a given period. VAT, whose rate is set at 12 percent, is a form of sales tax imposed on revenues from the sale of goods and services.

Buñag also said the slowdown in inflation had a drag-down effect on the BIR's performance, as the lower-than-expected consumer prices led to the lower-than-programmed VAT collection.

Assistant Commissioner Nestor Valeroso, head of the BIR's large taxpayers service, said collection performance of the BIR should instead be measured in terms of year-on-year comparison.

If compared to the 2005 collection, the BIR's performance in 2006 marked an improvement. Valeroso attributed this to programs intended to enhance efficiency in tax collection.

But the full implementation of the VAT Reform law in 2006 also had largely to do with the year-on-year rise in VAT collection.

In November 2005, coverage of the VAT was expanded to include oil and electricity. The law likewise raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent in February last year.

The Department of Finance, head agency of the BIR, said that of the tax agency's total VAT collection in 2006, P76.88 billion was accounted for by the implementation of the VAT law.

Without the implementation of the law, therefore, the BIR's total VAT collection for 2006 would be lower than that for 2005.

The incremental revenues from the VAT law last year surpassed the government's goal of generating P75 billion more from the tax measure.

The law, unpopular as it was, was considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda. The government said the implementation of the VAT law was necessary to help it achieve its goal of a zero budget deficit by 2008.

Last year, the government's deficit hit only P62.2 billion. This was much lower than the P146.8-billion recorded in 2005.

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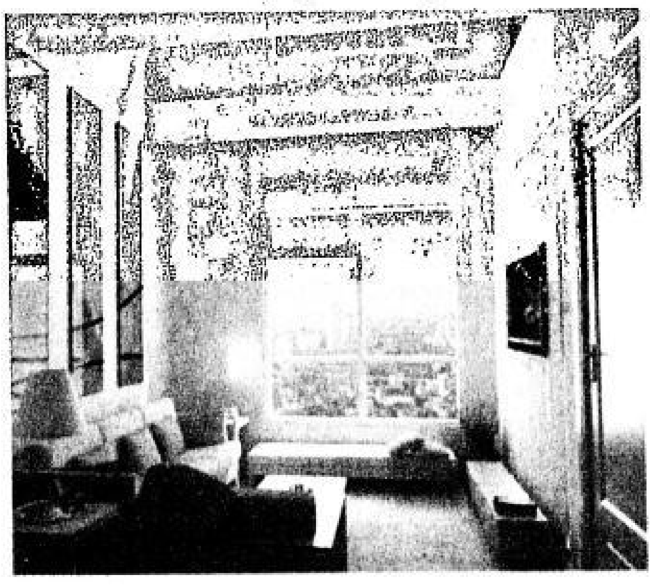

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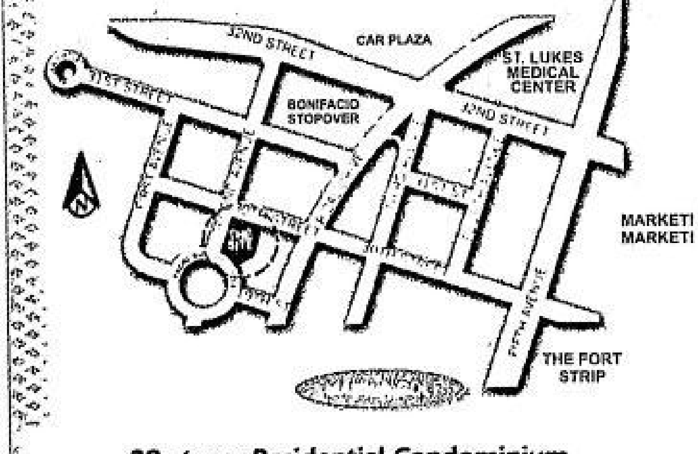

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Breaking the cartel in the cement industry

Why do cement prices go up when supply is down?

By Eduardo A. Morato Jr.
Professor, Asian Institute of Management

THE BASIC LAW OF SUPPLY AND demand does not seem to apply to the Philippine cement industry. When demand is low and supply is high, prices are supposed to go down. When demand is high and supply is low, prices are supposed to go up.

In the Philippines, prices of cement have been skyrocketing since January 1999 after Cemex and Holderbank, two large global cement consolidators purchased three local cement firms—Apo Cement, Rizal Cement and Alsons Cement.

Blue Circle and Holderbank had already bought Fortune Cement, Union Cement and Republic Cement in 1998.

The Goldman Sachs Cement Industry Report of June 2000 concluded that the global cement firms spent some $2 billion to buy stakes in 100 million tons of cement capacity after the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The globals "dominate the Philippines (91 percent) and have significant interests in Indonesia (57 percent), Thailand (37 percent), and Malaysia (33 percent)." Goldman Sachs concluded that "highly concentrated markets allow for better pricing power." The same report showed the steep climb of cement prices from P1,300 per ton in January 1999 to P2,300 per ton in January 2000.

Prices up despite weak demand

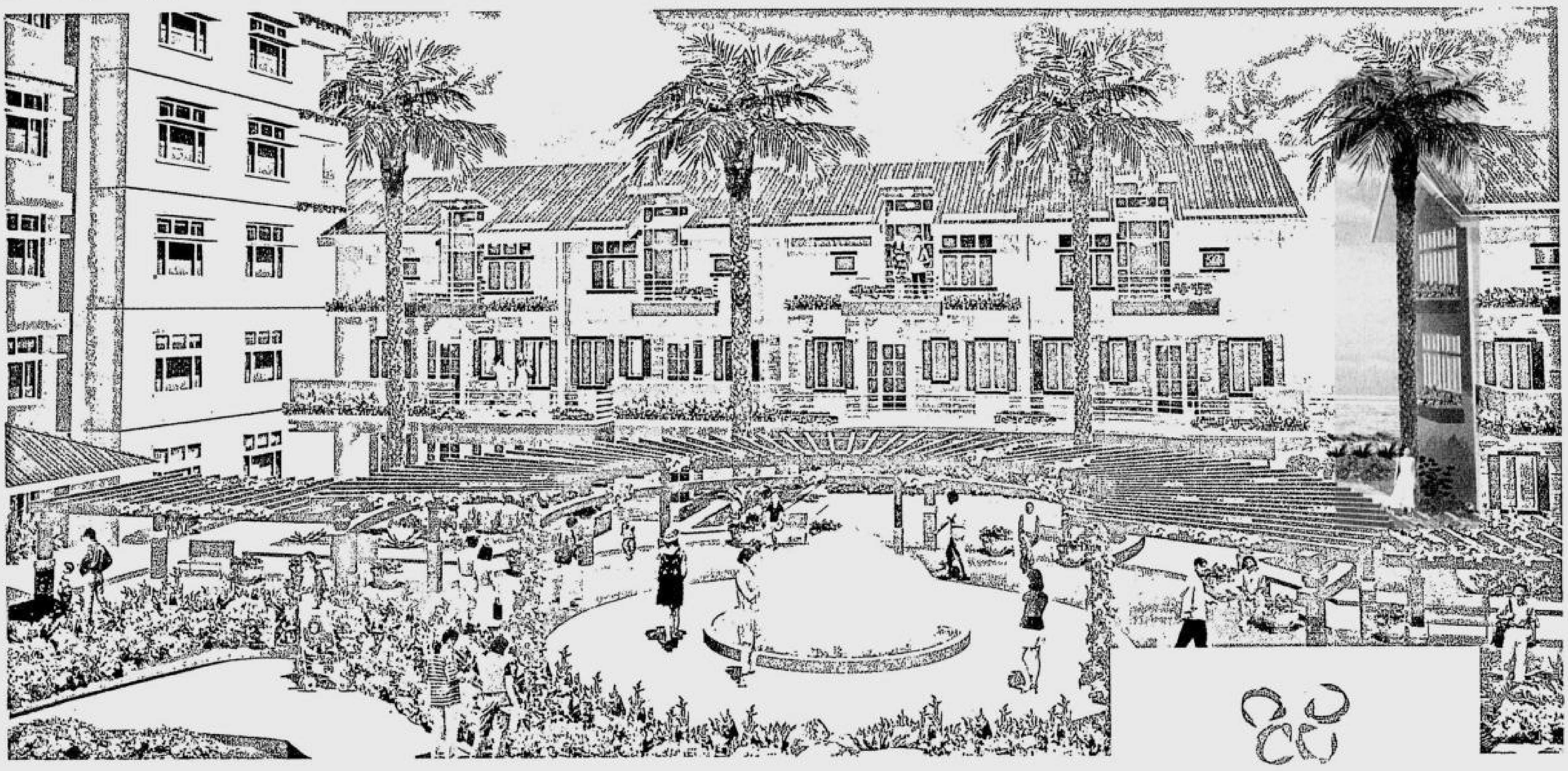
Cement prices continued to go up despite weak demand after 2000. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) issued the Industry Profile on Cement in August 2006 revealing that cement prices ballooned from P100 per 40-kg bag (or P 2,500 per metric ton) in 2000 to P165 per bag (or P4,125 retail per MT) in 2005. The DTI estimated apparent cement demand (i.e. local production plus imports less exports) of 303 million bags in 2000, decreasing to 248.7 million bags in 2005. This condition definitely violates the basic law of supply and demand, fulfilling the Goldman Sachs prediction of an "orderly market," otherwise known as a cartel, and the prospects of "better pricing and profitability" for cement plants in the Philippines.

Cartel breakers

Enter now the cartel breakers. The Yuchengco group of companies and Eduardo Cojuangco are setting up separate cement factories. The two plants will have a minimum annual capacity of one million metric tons each.

The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (2004 to 2010)

BREAKING/ B2-4



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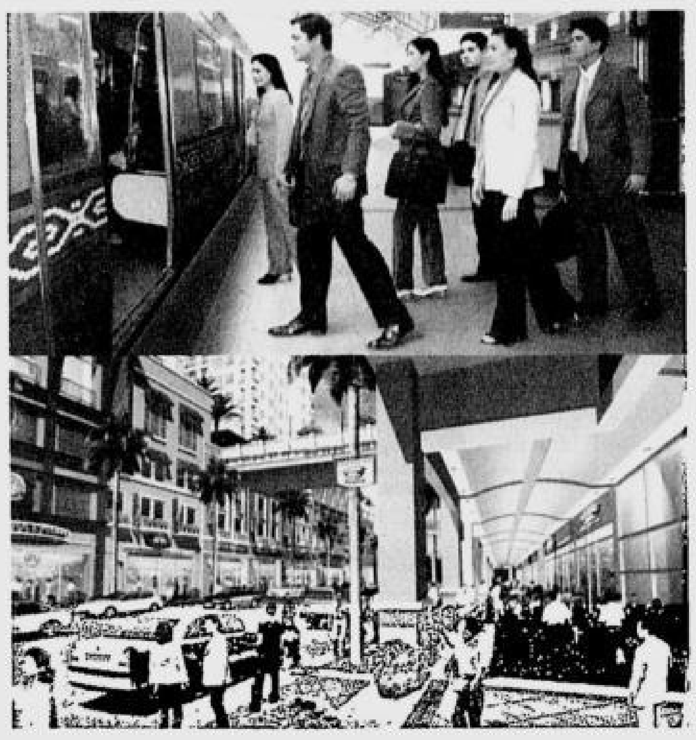

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From the LRT-2 along Aurora Boulevard, Ateneo and UP in Quezon City and Manila's university belt are just minutes away. The MRT-3 along EDSA brings Makati, Ortigas and Taft Avenue within easy reach. Both lines join up with the LRT-1, making it easy to go anywhere from Monumento in Caloocan to Baclaran in Parañaque.

Surrounded by the Araneta Center's hot spots.

Be in the middle of a pulsating lifestyle and leisure center: the Araneta Center. From your home, a four-story **transfer station** with a hotel-style lobby, grand staircase and four passenger elevators brings you to the third level of Gateway Mall, which hosts the Oasis, a unique floating garden. From here, simply walk to the Araneta Coliseum. Or to Rustan's, SM, Shopwise, Ali Mall or Farmers Plaza.

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When you're done exploring the world outside, your home is just a breath away. Whether it's an executive studio or one-bedroom suite, **Manhattan Parkway** offers you soothing views of the Araneta Center and Manila Bay. What's more, enjoy hours of active play at the fourth-level garden deck. There are trellised walkways, jogging trails, a fitness station, an indoor sauna/spa and a gym. And if that's not enough, a footbridge leads to more play amenities at the upcoming phases.

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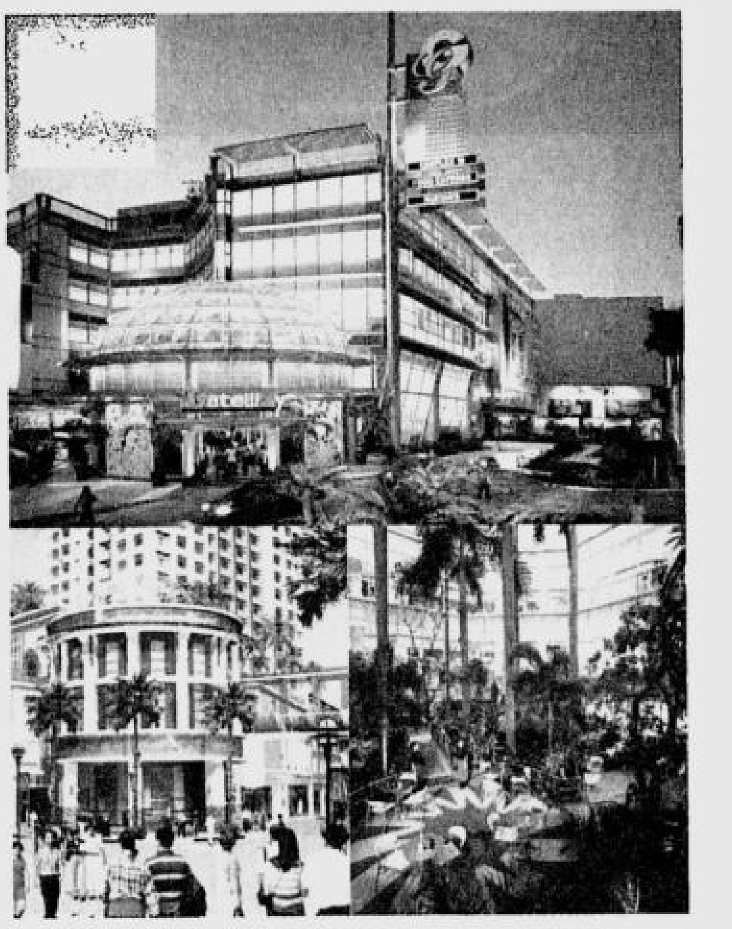

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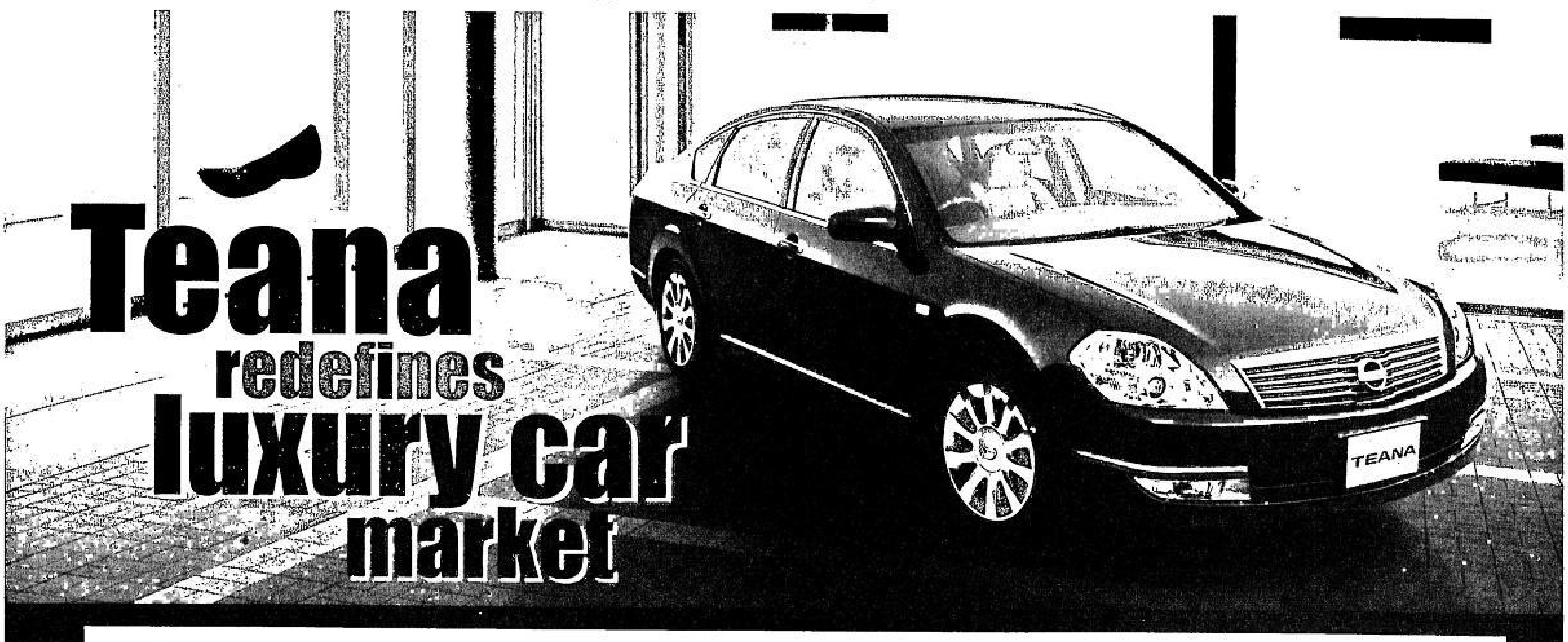


Teana redefines luxury car market

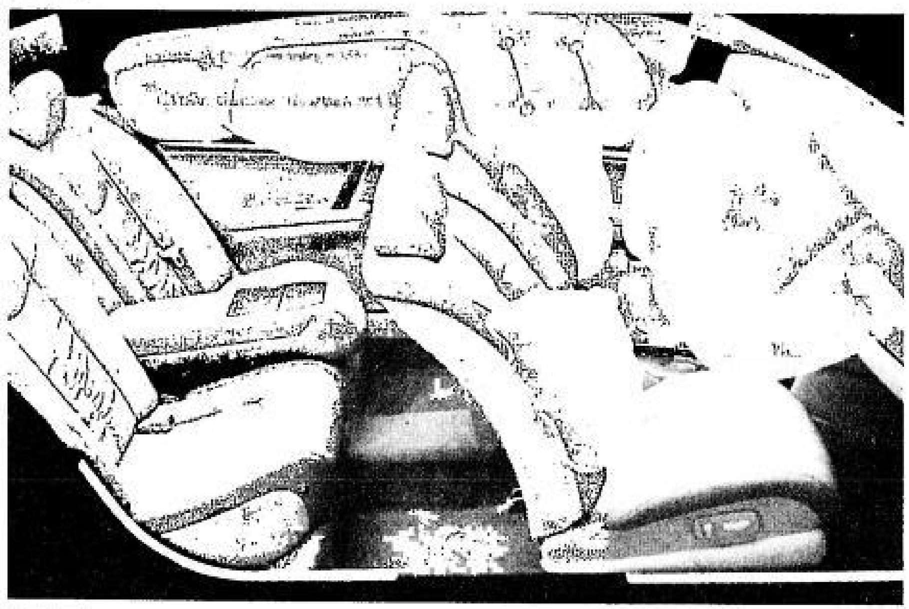
February 19, 2007 Nissan Motor Philippines, Inc. (NMPI) redefines the meaning of luxury sedan with the formal introduction of its newest salvo, the Nissan Teana. Priced initially to compete head on with luxury vehicles of its size and displacement, the Teana will be made available in two variants, the 230 JM and the 230 JK.

Teana comes from a native American word meaning "dawn", as it represents the dawn of an all-new luxury sedan. Built on the pillars of real world technology, modern design and impeccable quality, the Teana gives a fresh new meaning to elegance.

Setting the standards for innovation, the Teana luxury sedan began the series of products that features distinctive and high-quality interiors. The Modern Living Concept which stresses advanced thinking in cabin design was first introduced with the Teana. Nissan has adopted and extended the concept in succeeding products including the Tiida compact, the Fuga (known elsewhere as the Infiniti M) luxury sedan and the Bluebird Sylphy compact sedan. Traditional Japanese interior architecture focuses on carefully balanced line and surfaces, the use of natural materials and the elimination of excessive decoration. Nissan's modern living concept builds on this tradition and Japanese DNA. The harmony of it all creates relaxed mobile spaces as comfortable as any other living space while supporting the pleasure of driving.

Elegant interior and stylish body proportions

In keeping with the times, Nissan began placing emphasis on interior designs as the company recognizes that the automobile has become a key living space where people spend a great part of their day in. The Teana's most salient feature is its elegant interior reminiscent of a modern living room. The cabin breathes of opulence embracing occupants in a relaxing almost Zen-like riding comfort. The seats call to mind warm images of a cozy recliner as the instrument panel highlighted by the bold-use of wood-grain trim resembles a furnished piece of high-class furniture. The luxury grade 230JM comes complete with sunroof, remotely controlled rear power sunshade and a 6-disc CD changer to add that extra touch of lavishness.



The Teana interior features full automatic climate control air-conditioner with dual -zone temperature controls and rear passenger air-con vent. The dial-type air conditioner control allows easy, intuitive setting of desired cabin temperature. The adoption of the FF-L (Front engine, Front-wheel drive platform, Large) platform provides spacious comfort for both the driver and the passenger, including one of the best-in-class knee room. The 230JM features power front-passenger seat coupled with memory seat for the driver's side. When the engine is turned off the driver's seat slides 40mm backwards allowing easier ingress and egress.

The beautifully balanced exterior creates a distinct sense of dynamism while hinting at the exceptional roominess and comfort found inside. Its styling pursues a superior level of perceived quality, with the entire body giving the impression of being a solid mass.

Power and Safety within

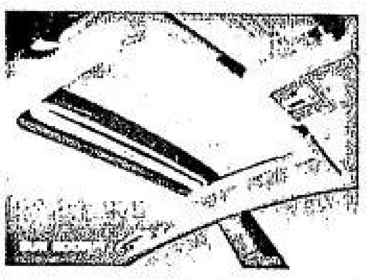
Under the hood the Teana's VQ23DE engine has been developed with meticulous care paid to its torque output in the practical speed of everyday driving. The V configuration, 24 valve, 6 cylinder engine delivers exceptional driving performance giving enough power and torque to propel the large sedan to a high yet comfortable and solid driving speed. This engine is shared with the 350Z, the Murano and even the U.S. market Maxima and the Infiniti line of vehicles. The independent multi-link with stabilizer bar rear suspension delivers superb handling and stability. Despite being a large sedan the Teana is remarkably easy to drive with its minimum turning radius of 5.3m and hood design that readily enables the driver to see the outer edges of the car.

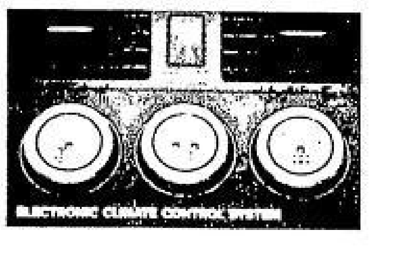
Sharing the heritage of the award winning VQ engine family, the Teana's VQ23DE 6 cylinder engine can deliver power of 173 PS at 6,000 rpm and torque of 22.9 kg-m at 4,400 rpm. This is a very satisfying power band, which is very competitive versus the other Japanese luxury sedans in the market.

The comfort of driving is backed up by Nissan's "Triple Safety" initiative. The Information safety through the Xenon headlights, Human Machine interface that shows real-time information about fuel consumption, distance traveled and temperature warning indicator. The Control safety through the Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA) and Electronic Brake force Distribution (EBD) System. And the Impact safety through active head restraints, double pretensioner seat belt system and SRS curtain and side airbags. For the luxury 230JM the HMI monitor also displays the back view reversing camera for the safety of reversing the vehicle.

Already the meticulous motoring media has passed verdict over the Teana. EVO magazine, respected for its no-nonsense scrutiny of high end luxury cars wrote, 'The Nissan Teana 2.3Jm is a very good car that excels in the areas of comfort and safety, but it isn't a sports sedan and it never tries to be either. It's very honest about it. ... As it stands, Nissan fans will rejoice and so will the occupants that ride in the Teana.". While C! Magazine's highly technical evaluation calls it a renaissance for Nissan Motors Philippines, Inc., "the clean sheet design of the dashboard; it had lots of useful buttons and switches yet it was not cluttered. ... Best of all it respected the raw materials used; i.e. leather was tucked and sewn while wood, in the best tradition of Rolls Royce cabinetry came in matte finished solid planks..."

Elegant. stylish, powerful and luxurious, the Teana offers a true regal driving experience. "With the success of the Murano in the luxury car segment, we are confident the Teana will follow this lead and carve a niche for itself in the M-class (luxury) segment," says Leman Lee, President and CEO of NMPI. The two variants of the Teana include the 230JM and the 230JK. NMPI has started its premium sales campaign for the Teana and those with an eye for quality and sophistication have certainly taken noticed. Till February 28 avail of this exclusive offer through our selected Nissan dealerships.

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The Teana is undeniably beautiful, its mere sight will make you understand the obvious pride that comes from owning such a luxury sedan.

(Nissan News Service)

AWARD-WINNING VQ POWERPLANT

Nissan's VQ engine receives Wards's 10-Best Engines Award

In an unprecedented event, Nissan's legendary VQ-series 3.5L DOHC V-6 engine seizes its 13th consecutive Ward's 10 Best Engines honor. The VQ series engine is the only engine that has been part of the list every year since the award has been presented. This famed engine is acknowledged as one of the best six-cylinder engine designs in the automotive world.

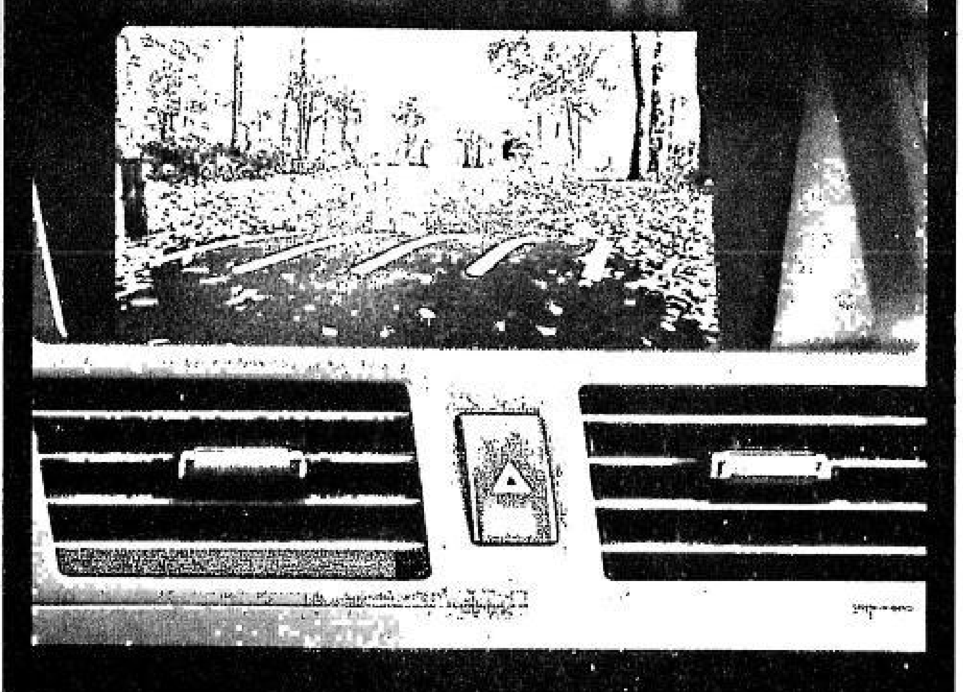
The VQ-series engine is offered in a variety of Nissan and Infiniti vehicles. The award-winning 3.5L DOHC V-6 engine powers the soul of the Murano and the 350Z. Both vehicles pride on aesthetic appeal coupled with powerful driving performance.

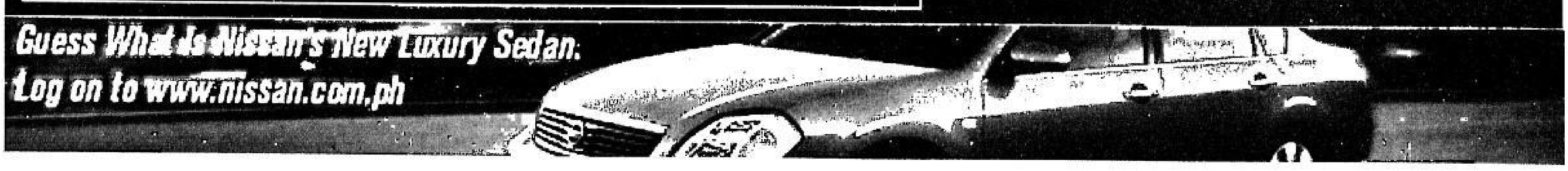
With its unique design of clean lines flowing nicely over rounded corners and angles, the Murano's styling remains ageless. It is one of Nissan's vehicles that demonstrates what the "revived" brand is all about - bold products with thoughtful engineering. Equipped with Continuously Variable-valve Timing Control (CVTC) and Nissan Induction Control System (NICS), the engine produces 234PS at 6,000rpm and 32.4 kg-m of torque at 3,600rpm. Its X-tronic Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) with six-speed manual mode assures smooth delivery of power to all four wheels.

The same power runs through Nissan's renowned 350Z. Running at 206Kw at 6200rpm, 363Nm of torque at 4800rpm, it is a testament to Nissan's racing heritage and experience coupled with microscopic attention to detail.

Sharing this famed engine heritage is Nissan's next luxury sedan, the Teana. The powerful VQ23DE engine of the Teana delivers solid driving performance in all situations, from in-town driving to high-speed cruising. It is an advanced luxury sedan built on purposeful design, real world technology and impeccable quality.

Voting for the best engines was a team of ten editors and writers for Ward's AutoWorld magazine and Ward's Engine & Vehicle Technology Update newsletter. The Award was presented last January 9, 2007 at the Renaissance Center Marriott during the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.




Guess What Is Nissan's New Luxury Sedan:
Log on to www.nissan.com.ph

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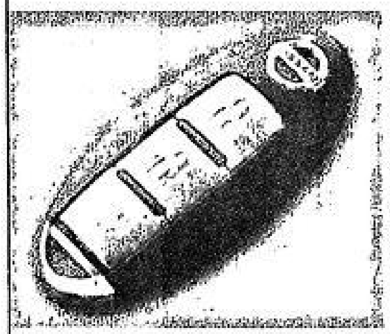

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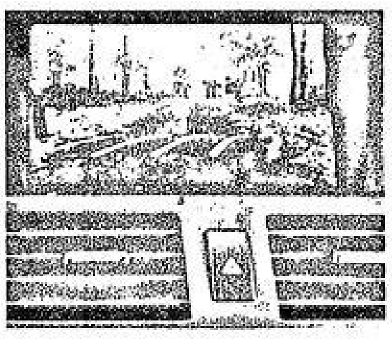

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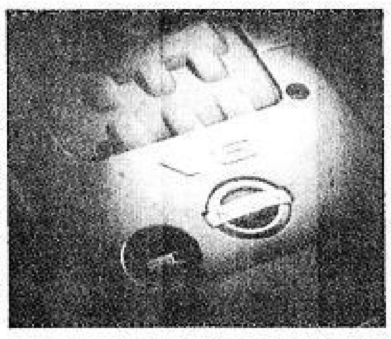

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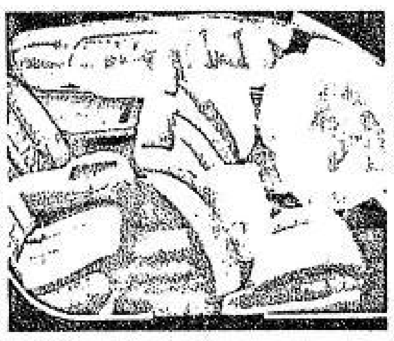

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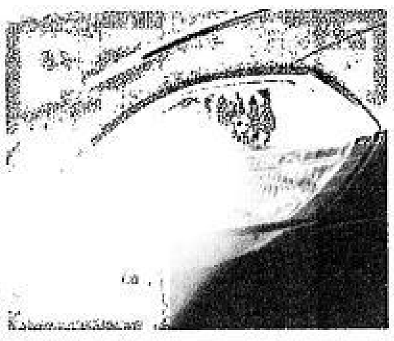

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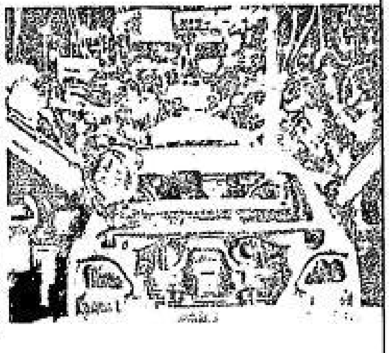

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Bringing back values in education

IN 1987, TO HELP HELP ARREST THE deterioration of moral values in national life, especially among the youth, then Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) ordered the inclusion of Values Education in the public high school curriculum. However, although the intention was good, the teachers assigned to teach the subject at that time could not make heads or tails of the values education materials that were being produced. Sensing the need to train teachers who can effectively teach values education, the University of Asia and the Pacific (then Center for Research and Communication), led by Rina Malvar Villegas, went around the 16 regions of the archipelago to conduct seminars on values education in the context of the dignity of the personhood of the learners, the dignity of work, the nobility of the teaching profession, and family solidarity.

On May 19, 1990, CRC was granted an official approval to pioneer the Master of Arts in Education, major in Values Education (MAVE) program under CRC's Institute for Development Education. "Values Education is a discipline with its own scope and sequence. Since Values Education was not anybody's specialization then, teachers needed deliberate and extensive training to man the newly established Values Education department in their schools," said Villegas, MAVE program director.

In 2002, however, there was a restructuring in the basic education curriculum. Values integration was at the centerpiece of the curriculum, thereby reducing the daily sessions in Values Education to once or twice a week.

In 2006, the MAVE program was offered again to teachers, administrators, NGOs and private organizations. Admission into the program cuts across religion, culture, social class, and even professional work.

Since 1990, MAVE has produced 809 graduates from 75 provinces. Muslims, Christians—and even pagans—Chinese, Tagalog, highlanders, Maranaos, Ilonggos, Kalingas and educators from other cultural minorities appreciate the program. A graduate from Sultan Kudarat said that she became a better Muslim after MAVE.

Through their own efforts, the MAVE alumni have achieved rich education development in their regions, cities, provinces and towns. Many of the graduates have been designated as department heads and even principals in their schools. Most have been promoted to upper levels of their position. Managers and administrators are likewise immersed in effecting developments in their companies and community.

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Breaking . . .

From page B2-1

justifies this entry with its supply-demand forecast for 2005 to 2012. The existing supply of 462 million bags in 2005 is expected to remain the same until 2012 while the demand of 249 million bags in 2005 is forecasted to increase by a high 12 percent a year, reaching 491 million bags in 2011 and 550 million bags in 2012.

This creates a "supply deficit" of 29 million bags in 2011 and 88 million bags in 2012. This 2012 projected deficit is sufficient to justify the two cement plants, which will have a combined output of 80 million bags or two million metric tons per annum.

Cojuangco's Eagle Cement Plant will be in Bulacan. It is expected to cost P6.73 billion and produce 1.08 million MT or 26.4 million bags of Portland cement. Eagle Cement announced that it would sell the cement at 25 percent cheaper than the current prices. The Board of Investments expects it to be one of the lowest cost producers of cement. The new plant would enjoy zero duty for the importation of capital equipment and an income tax holiday of four years.

What BOI wants

It is clear what BOI wants to happen. It stipulated that the new cement plant must adhere to the selling prices that Eagle promised in its proposal. The BOI also imposed a "four-year lock-up period for the company to sell majority of its shares to avoid being gobbled up by the cartel or the BOI would have to refund the incentives and cancel its registration." BOI expects that the lower production cost of Eagle cement, partly due to its co-generation power plant, will help the Filipino consumers.

The Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (CeMAP) contested the BOI decision. Its own cement forecast points to a continuing oversupply until 2012. It estimates clinker capacity to remain at 18.48 million MT and cement capacity at 26.78 million MT. Demand would only be 12.11 million MT for clinker and 14.24 million MT for cement.

In his September 2006 letter, CeMAP president, Ernesto Ordoñez, requested Trade Secretary Peter Favila to intervene citing the "perceived inconsistent and hostile climate for foreign investments in the country because vested interests will have an unfair advantage over the existing manufacturers many of whom are foreign investors."

Ordoñez claimed that there was a violation of the Omnibus Investment Code since incentives were being granted to an industry whose measured capacity exceeded demand. He continued, "local demand of cement is only 56 percent of industry capacity ... giving incentives to a severely overcapacity industry is economically unsound."

Returns

A manager of Holcim Philippines, one of the globally controlled cement companies, cited that their company is only getting a return on equity of 7 percent in 2005. However its Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) return on assets of 15 percent is at the upper level of what Goldman Sachs considers a good return (8 to 17 percent).

Analyzing the 2005 income statement of Holcim, power and fuel represented 42 percent of their cost of sales. In its annual report, Holcim revealed that it owns 50 percent of TA Power, its power provider. Holcim is obligated to pay TA Power a minimum offtake volume of electricity amounting to 220 million kilowatt hours whether the said electricity is consumed or not.

In December 2005, TA Power agreed to reduce this to 180 million for 2006. This suggests a cross-subsidy of 40 million kwh to TA Power in the past. The 40 million extra represents 22 percent excess payment, or P1 billion in additional power costs.

If the Eagle Cement plant will have more modern technology, BOI incentives and cheaper power costs due to its co-generation strategy, then it would, in fact, be able to price its cement 25 percent lower than prevailing cement prices. It would, thus, be able to serve the purposes of the Philippine government, which is to break the seeming cartel in the cement industry.

What seems clear is that the global cement consolidators took advantage of the Asian financial crisis to buy up most (91 percent) of the Philippine cement plants. The country was particularly vulnerable because its entrepreneurs were all too willing to sell out and make a lot of money in the process. But that is business. That the global players were able to jack up cement prices and make their investments worthwhile is also clear.

These global players should, therefore, understand that it is a government's sovereign right to protect its citizens from international predators. That is simply serving the public interest and good governance.

CeMAP has spoken for the vested interests of foreign investors. CeMAP seems to have made the environment hostile for the Filipino consumer. In the absence of a good anti-trust law, who else is left to speak on behalf of the Filipino people except its own government. Goldman Sachs admitted that global consolidation failed in Korea after the Korean government fined producers for price collusion. The Korean government got smart very early on in 2000. The Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia fell prey to global carpetbaggers, clueless about what was happening. As the most clueless of them all, the Philippine government took some time to react, but, as they say, better late than never.

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LIFESTYLE

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HANDUWARAN group from Tondo, Manila

International 'rondalla' groups converge in Dumaguete for the Philippine Arts Festival

A whole new world— of 'rondalla'

By Ian Rosales Casocot
Contributor

MUSIC MAY WHAT FINALly and truly unite a perpetually divided world. And the world, indeed, will come together in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, this year to celebrate the tradition of string music in the second edition of the International Rondalla Festival Feb. 19-22.

One highlight presents four world-class ensembles in a concert billed "One: Cuerdas sa Panaghiusa" on Feb. 22 in Claire Isabel McGill Luce Auditorium at Silliman University. The concert will gather acclaimed *rondalla* groups of Negros, including the Kabataang Silay Ensemble from Negros Occidental and Kwerdas from Negros Oriental, together with Quartette Phoenix of Ekaterinburg, Russia, and Three Plucked Strings of Israel.

It may prove to be an interesting musical combination, spanning generations of musical performers playing a wide variety of string traditions, each of which has a specific cultural expression.

The Kabataang Silay Ensemble, which started in 1993 as a group of musically gifted primary-school students in Silay City, has distinguished itself not only for the active promotion of traditional Filipino folk music and dance but also for serving as an effective component for tourism promotion and youth development.

They have extensively traveled around the country as Young Cultural Ambassadors, and have represented the Philippines in the Second Asian Children's Folklore Festival in Guandong, China, in 2000, where they received the Performance Memento distinction.

In 2001, they were given the Award of Excellence for their performance in the 2001 Aberdeen International Youth Festival held in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Russia's Quartette Phoenix was created in 2001 by a group of Ural State Academy of Music graduates which included Inessa Gareeva, Anatoly Kazakov, Radi Gareev and Alexander Ivanov, all of them acclaimed laureates of various international competitions. They have been critically acclaimed for their originality as well as in their diversity of style and repertoire that has made them popular fare among Russian audiences.

Israeli group

Three Plucked Strings, playing a repertoire to display the colorful and diverse character of the Jewish and Israeli culture, is a contemporary ensemble dedicated to the performance of pieces by foremost Israeli composers, commissioned especially for this trio. It was founded in 2000 after the posthumous discovery of a rare work for mandolin, guitar and harpsichord (never performed) written by acclaimed Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim.

Since then, over 10 original works, by such composers as Tzvi Avni, Yehezkel Braun, Haim Alexander, Abel Ehrlich, Michael Wolfe and Slava Ganelin, have been written for the ensemble.

Silliman University's Kwerdas is a six-member *rondalla* group composed of students, faculty and alumni of the College of Performing Arts, founded in 1999 as an ad-hoc musical group for the classes of ethnomusicologist Priscilla Magdamo-Abraham.

Since that inauspicious beginning, the group has gone on to national acclaim, and has performed in international exhibitions and competitions. Kwerdas was among the pioneer participants of the 1st International Rondalla Festival in Bicol, and chosen to perform at the Cultural Center of the Philippines with four other groups for the festival's final concert.

The festival—which is presented by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Province of Negros Oriental, in cooperation with the University of the Philippines College of Music and the Musicological Society of the Philippines—aims to explore the

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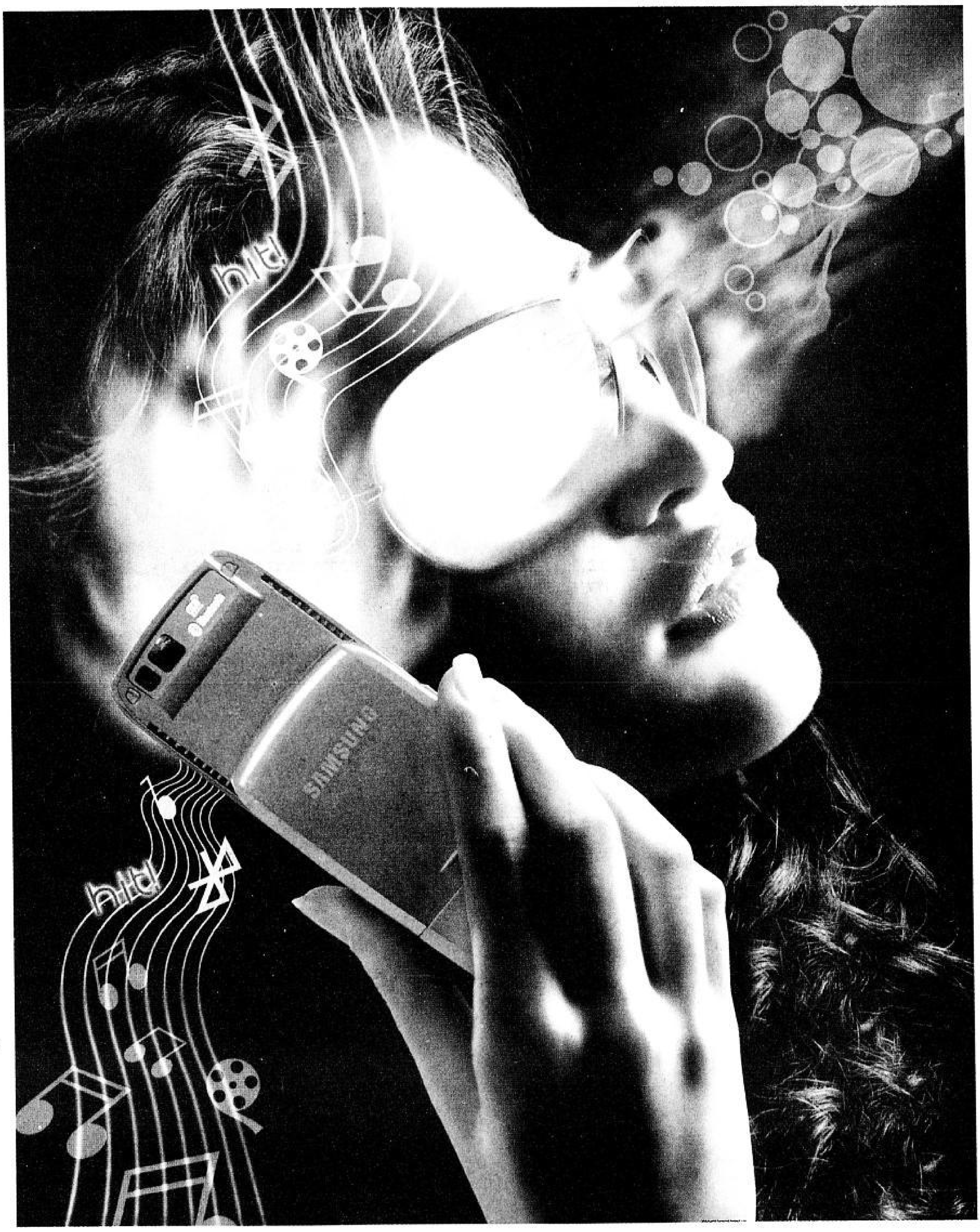

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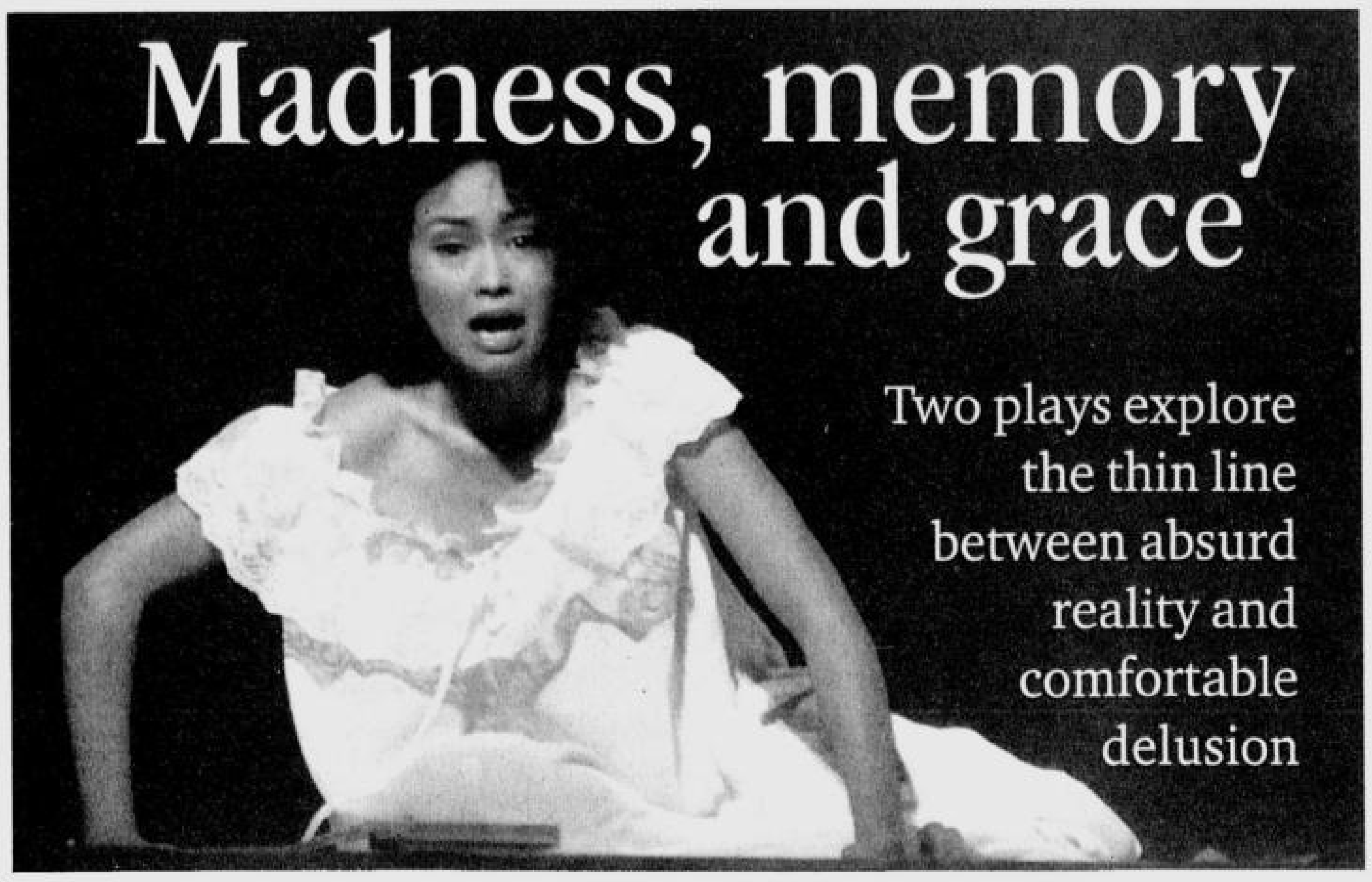

Madness, memory and grace

Two plays explore the thin line between absurd reality and comfortable delusion

By Gibbs Cadiz

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS described "The Glass Menagerie" as a "memory play," where reveries happened to music and truth came "in the pleasant disguise of illusion."

These words weren't in his notes. They formed the opening lines of the play itself, spoken by the Narrator, Tom Wingfield.

This convention-busting opening allowed Williams to set both the spirit and style of the play: nostalgia, wistfulness—a looking back at the past with all the mournful, brittle hindsight of the present.

LAURICE Guillen with Ana Feleo, Randy Villarama and Jake De Leon

For a drama that thus began by announcing its intention to steep itself in the narcotizing effects of memory, Tanghalang Ateneo's "The Glass Menagerie," under Ricky Abad's direction, spent an uncomfortable amount of time peering into—nay, preempting—the future.

The dreamy, rueful air that Williams brought to his most personal work—"The Glass Menagerie" most closely mirrored his own family life—curdled every time the play segued into its clairvoyant mode.

But what are we saying? The play could have been a dramatic reading of Depression-era economic numbers, and still we'd have sat through it if only for one reason: Laurice Guillen.

The actress-director was back on stage after an eternal absence of 30 years, so to miss her performance as Amanda Wingfield would be to invite precisely the kind of florid regret engendered by the play.

Amanda and her children, restless Tom and crippled Laura, comprise the Wingfields, a family struggling with the weight of faded dreams and vanished comforts in 1930s St. Louis. How to find Laura a husband—or at least a gentleman caller who would bring a whiff of hope to the household—is Amanda's obsession, and one that would ultimately shatter the family.

Three decades of not practicing the craft had made Guillen tentative, especially in the beginning, but when she found her groove, she was formidable.

She deftly mined Amanda's tender, humorous vein, extracting a character at once forceful, flirty and touchingly insecure. Her voice was a fine instrument: honey laced with lime, cajoling one moment, cutting the next.

In a bit of stunt casting, Guillen's real-life daughters Ana and Ina Feleo alternated in the role of Laura, with rather unconvincing results. They acted with fervor, but were undone by something else—Ana's buxom frame and straightforward manner, which hardly made for a shy and fragile Laura; and Ina's radiant beauty, which mocked the notion that her character had never had a gentleman caller in her life.

Dramatic embellishment

Ron Capinding and Jake de Leon shared the role of Tom, while Jim O'Connor (the gentleman caller) was played by Arnold Reyes and Randy Villarama. They held their own suitably, if unmemorably, against Guillen's shadow. Capinding, an otherwise ace actor, tended to overdo his trademark tics to convey his character's desperation.

Williams' text doesn't make clear that Laura's congenital shyness leads to psychosis in the end, but this version made it explicit with a dramatic embellishment that only managed to bog down the play.

Every now and then, to illustrate Laura's gradual mental decline as she wrestled with her trapped state, ghostlike figures in hospital clothes appeared and twirled to choreographed movements—"a footnote that imagines what happened to Laura after Tom left the Wingfield apartment," explained Abad in the playbill.

"Over-choreographed" is perhaps the right word, because these wraiths in white suddenly had their own story to tell. Nurse and doctor were kissing, to the consternation of Laura's stand-in. They marched in and out at almost every other scene shift, but instead of helping move the play along, they interrupted it.

LAURICE Guillen (second from right) with Arnold Reyes, Ina Feleo and Ron Capinding in Tanghalang Ateneo's "The Glass Menagerie." Left: Kalila Aguilos in Tanghalang Pilipino's "The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)"

Most unforgivably, they cut in on Guillen's monologue in Act II, distracting our attention just as Amanda was summoning haunting recollections of long-ago summers filled with flowers and adoring young men.

This projected *"baliw-baliwan"* sideshow was totally superfluous. It only scraped against the grain of "The Glass Menagerie" as a play shrouded in the haze of memory and longing. Illusion, yes, but of the future, and therefore a banal one.

Defining motif

Madness also serves as the defining motif in Tanghalang Pilipino's "Ang Mga Huwad," Rody Vera's stage adaptation of F. Sionil José's novel "The Pretenders," under Chris Millado's direction.

In José's impassioned narrative on the infinite corrupting power of the Filipino upper class, the lunacy of Carmen Villa, the wife of the main character Tony Samson, might be construed as castigation for the collective sins of her social peers.

But while José tucked it near the end of the book like an afterthought, Vera and Millado have seized on the image of Villa's tangled memories as the play's dramatic anchor, the prism through which the story of Tony Samson would unfold onstage.

To approximate the jumbled, random thoughts of a madwoman as she flitted in and out of lucidity while reading Samson's diary, the play employs a structure heavy on flashback, skewed time and abstract spacing.

Tuxqs Rutaquio's set of cold geometric planes punctuated here and there by dead saplings helps convey the aridity of the life the plebeian Samson took for himself when he married into the grasping aristocracy.

His journey from fiery innocent to walking wounded shapes and sears the memory of his grief-stricken wife Carmen (Kalila Aguilos), who goes mad with guilt for having betrayed her husband and left him twisting in the wind.

Samson (played by Romnick Sarmenta) sallies forth a creature of high principle, but sputters to his bleak end a compromised and hollow man, as wealth and privilege make their mark on him. His dreams for the betterment of his class are stymied at every turn—*"mga hangaring nakalutang sa ere,"* as his friend Godo calls them.

So far, so good. What unreels on stage, however, while almost cinematic in its transitions and fey touches (the Spanish chanteuse crossing the stage on a dolly, for instance), never vaults beyond the merely adequate.

The emotions of this powerful tale are seemingly constantly held in check by a listless undertow. The play itself has a diffuse, dramatically flat quality, its anecdotal structure contributing to a narrative that seems to lurch forward in fits and starts.

Stunning moment

Not that the actors don't try. Sarmenta may offer the marquee name, but this is Aguilos' play through and through. Her part is, in fact, unfortunate—for long stretches she is stranded dead center on the stage, required to sustain the "crazy" mode while the other actors perform their vignettes in one corner.

But Aguilos is fascinating to watch precisely because of the intelligent, disciplined gifts she brings to the role. Even her most frenzied moments are informed by a natural, empathetic touch, which makes her character never less than real.

Physically Sarmenta is perfect as Samson—attractive, heroic, his brown skin beautiful to behold. He loses some heft, however, whenever he speaks with his slender voice. And when agitated, his lines tend to come out indistinct.

Of the supporting cast, Paolo O'Hara as the temperamental journalist Godo delivers a full-bodied portrayal of an essentially decent man swimming in anger and helplessness. Wenah Nagales, Chiqui Xeres Burgos and Peewee O'Hara also make their presence felt.

"Ang Mga Huwad" has one stunning moment: that scene where four generations of Samsons—Tony, his son, his dead father and grandfather—all converge by the railroad track, the three forebears extending their hand to the boy as a train rumbles nearby.

Death and eternity, pain and forgiveness, the need to reconnect with and be transfigured by the grace of our past—all are distilled in that one eloquent tableau.

Most of the rest, alas, are static exertions—*"nakalutang sa ere,"* as it were.

"The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)" is on its last weekend, Feb. 23-25, at CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino. Call 8323661 or 8321125 locals 1620/1621.

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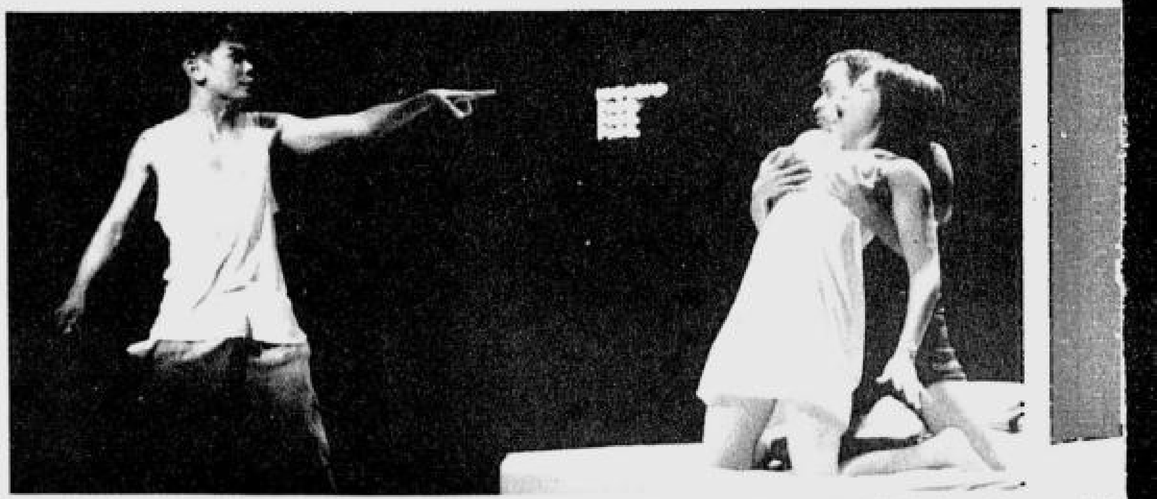

RODY Vera, Mailes Kanapi and Jojit Lorenzo in "Philippine Bedtime Stories," a Philippines-Japan collab

'Philippine Bedtime Stories' at

THE RINKO-GUN THEATER COMPANY of Tokyo and the Cultural Center of the Philippines present the Philippine premiere of "Philippine Bedtime Stories", on Feb. 23, 8 p.m. Feb. 24, 3 and 8 p.m., and on Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. at the CCP Tanghalang Huseng Batute (Studio Theater).

"Philippine Bedtime Stories" is a Philippines-Japan collaborative stage production supported by The Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM), Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, Sinag Arts Foundation and The Saison Foundation.

Directed by Toshihisa Yoshida, "Philip Bedtime Stories" is a collection of five conte rary theatrical vignettes staged in the bedr They are "Walang Iwanan" by Rene Villanu "Isang Libong Tula pasa sa Dibdib ni Dulce" Lallie Bucoy; "Ang Unang Aswang" by Rody "Single Brown Female" by José Victor To and "Ligaya sa Isang Pinoy Bar" by Japa playwright Shungiku Uchida. All plays wi performed in Tagalog and Japanese, with s

Lloyd Webber's 'Song and Da

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S "SONG and Dance" continues at OnStage in Greenbelt II—a production of Repertory Philippines and the City of Makati.

"Song and Dance" stars Carla Guevara-Laforteza, Danny Marshall and Powerdance.

Gino Gonzales' sets, Monino Duque's lights, Robbie Guevara's graphics, and the music played by Inday Echevarria and the RSVP String Ensemble complete the production.

"Rep has always tried to bring its audien something different in the season and this is tainly different." says Joy Virata, Rep's asso artistic director and director of "Song Dance." "We've also tried to bring Broadwa Manila for those who cannot afford to g Broadway—and hopefully for those who but enjoy seeing homegrown talent as well.

Translating thoughts, overlapping realities

By Shirley O. Lua
Contributor

NATIONAL ARTIST F. SIONIL JOSÉ'S "THE Pretenders" is a novel of thought and reflection. Considerable parts of the narrative dwell on the internal conflicts of Antonio "Tony" Samson, the character struggling to uphold his dreams and ideals in a society gnawed by hypocrisy and cynicism, and ruined by greed and self-interest.

And the foul deed is never realized for what it is. We suffer most who are blind to it, who do not recognize it or who justify it as part of the social fabric, as part of living itself... Thus, translating the language of the novel into that of theater seems a Herculean task.

Tanghalang Pilipino's production of "Ang Mga Huwad," directed by Chris Millado, proves that a novel of thought can come alive on stage. Rody Vera, who has adapted two other José's novels—"Tree" for Peta (title of play: "Balete") and "Mass" for Tanghalang Pilipino—has skillfully transformed "The Pretenders" into "Ang Mga Huwad," approximating the plot structure of the novel.

This adaptation echoes the thematic meanings of José's novel, reminding us that the issues and problems of society today are symptomatic of our nation's troubled histories.

In "Ang Mga Huwad," the characters' thoughts are artistically translated into dialogues, actions and juxtapositions. For instance, in the beginning of the play, the scene depicting Tony Samson's visit to his father in the penitentiary parallels that of his wife Carmen reading his diaries after his death. On stage, the two scenes are apportioned on two planes, representing different levels of realities.

And the levels of realities interact with one another: Carmen breaks off from her reading and cuts across spatial and temporal distances to address Samson, who pauses in the conversation with his father, to throw her a rejoinder. This convention is often used in theater to indicate "memory within memory."

Indeed, the play's inventiveness lies in the shifting or juxtaposition of scenes. A scene moves to the next with ease and certainty, or one plane shifts to another with deftness. Enough signs are established for the audience to note the shifts (e.g., Tony Samson steps on the tracks and "enters" the house of his *Manang* Betty).

One successful instance of juxtaposition: Samson recollects in a heart-rending voice his wife's infidelity. His monologue crosscuts and overlaps with that of Carmen's reminiscence of their first meeting in the Philippine Embassy in Washington. Simply rendered, this fascinating play of scenes effectively suggests an ironic subtext.

In a few instances, though, a juxtaposition may appear a bit contrived. The scene showing Samson's visit to Emy in Cabugawan, Pangasinan, intersperses with that of Carmen's recounting of Samson's and her trip to Cabugaw, Ilocos.

These two scenes are symbolically interrelated: Samson's reclaiming of his roots links to his acknowledgment of his offspring. However, in overlapping and crosscutting two equally intense scenes, the emotional impact of each scene tends to diminish, and the chance of enacting a poignant moment is forfeited.

Memorable and moving

Those growing up in the '70s would fondly remember the child actor who played Peping in the telenovela "Gulong ng Palad"—Romnick Sarmenta.

In the role of Tony Samson, Sarmenta delivers a memorable and moving performance.

ROMNICK Sarmenta, Kalila Aguilos and Roeder Camañag in "The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)"

With a look, a turn of the shoulder, a bend of the head or a significant pause, he conveys the complexity and depth of his character, hinting at the turmoil rising within the latter.

Of theatrical acting, exaggeration of movements is at times expected. This is the stage's attempt to reach the deaf old lady seated in the back row. However, a fine actor can express much in so little, and still give his character a haunting distinction.

Sarmenta is supported by an experienced cast, which includes Kalila Aguilos, who plays the part of Carmen Villa. Remarkable performances are to be credited to Chiqui Xerez-Burgos (as Don Manuel Villa), Ama Quiambao-Viray (as Mrs. Villa), Dido de la Paz (as Dean Lopez), Paolo O'Hara (as Godo Soler), Bong Cabrera (as Charlie) and Wenah Nagales as the scene-stealing flamenco singer.

In the play, Carmen serves as the narrator, linking the subplots and the different streams of narrations. Her moments of insanity alternate and intertwine with her memories of Tony Samson, and her tearful encounter with his diaries.

Regrettably, though, in this adaptation, Carmen is the least understood of José's characters. Her portrayal bordering on melodrama, she teeters on the verge of being reduced to a cliché—a madwoman who begins and ends the play.

The ancient Greeks knew that the enactment of death is always messy. That is why in their tragedy a messenger merely runs in to give a clinical report of a death. In "Ang Mga Huwad," the final scene after the death of Samson seems superfluous when the play could have ended on a more striking overtone.

Even if an adaptation seeks to faithfully capture and translate as much as possible every event in the novel, and follows the original plot as closely as possible the power of a dramatic ending is still unparalleled.

Throughout the play, the audience is aware of the railroad tracks, cleverly and visibly situated downstage, and has seen the signs of a train passing at intervals. The play could thus end very well and clean, like a Greek tragedy: Tony Samson walks casually yet deliberately down the tracks, following the footsteps of his fathers.

Subsequently the lights flash and the roar resounds, then silence falls on stage. And a messenger... On second thought, no need for a messenger.

Tanghalang Pilipino's "Ang Mga Huwad" is showing at CCP Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (CCP Little Theater) until Feb. 24-25.

Tanghalang Pilipino's 'Ang Mga Huwad' proves that a novel of thought can come alive on stage

---

orative stage production

CCP

tles in English.

The Filipino cast includes Vera, Mailes Kanapi, Raye Baquirin, Angeli Bayani, Jojit Lorenzo and Marj Lorico. They will be performing with Japanese actors Yuko Miyamoto, Mari Nakayama, Kenjiro Kawanaka, Tenshi Kamogawa, Takashige Mukai and Hideyuki Sugiyama. Translation is by Mayumi Chinda and Saiko Kuwayama. Yoji Sakate provides the artistic direction.

Call 5313491, 5319524 or 8321125.

ıce' from Rep

"Song and Dance," with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Don Black, has performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays at 3:30 p.m. until March 4.

Tickets are at P550, P350 and P250, available at the gate; at the Rep office at C2-A Building C, Karrivin Plaza, 2316 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati; and at all Ticketworld outlets. Call 8870710 or 8919999.

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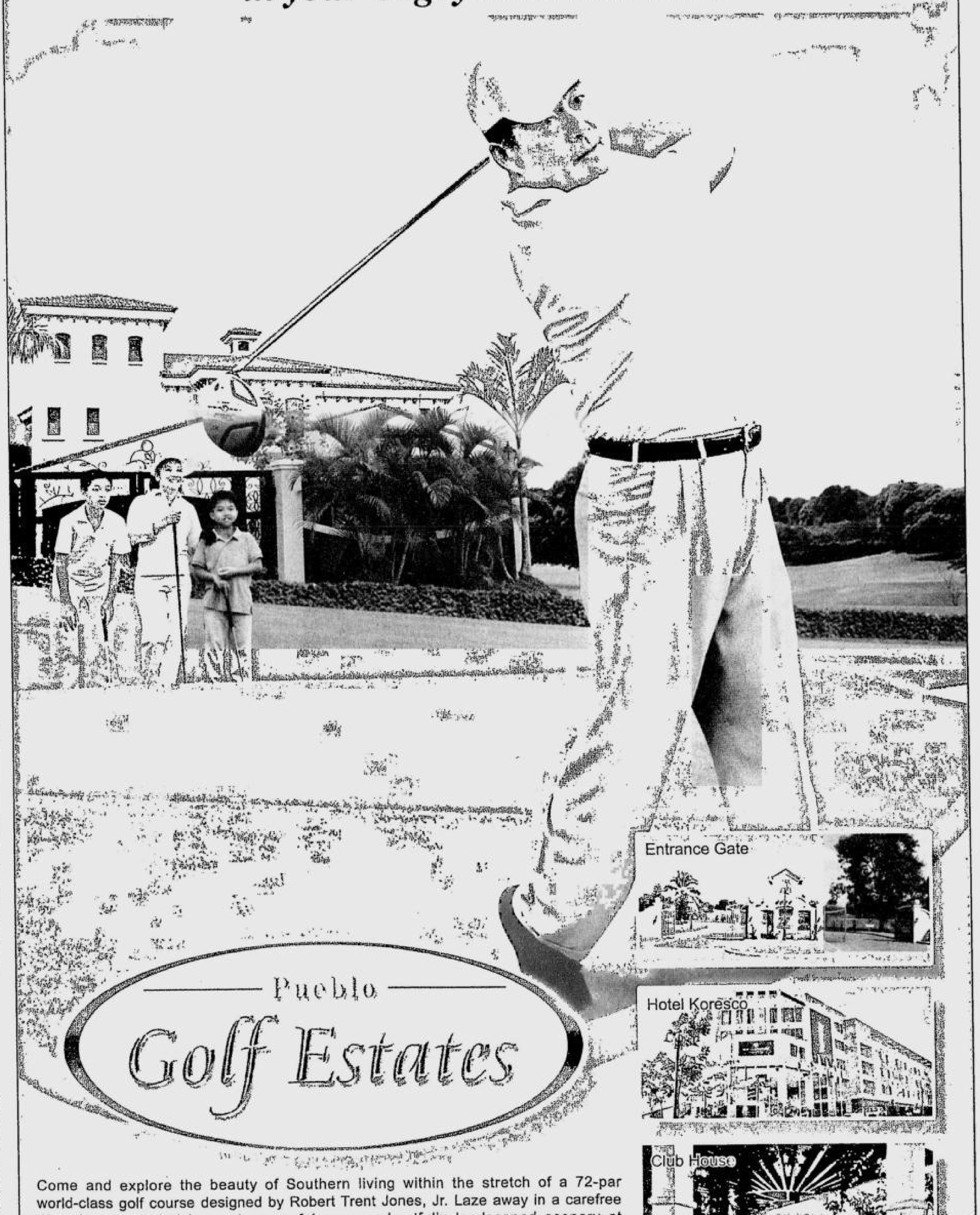

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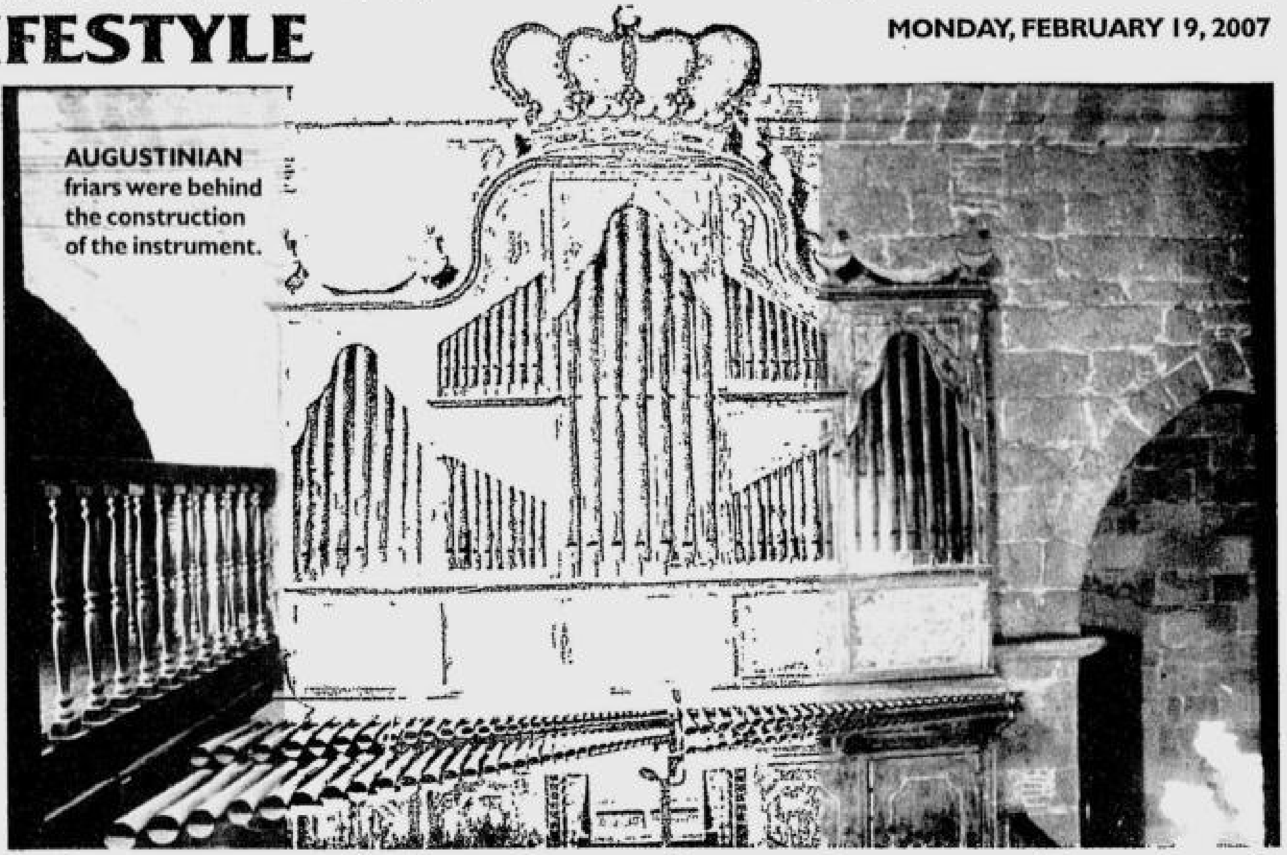
AUGUSTINIAN friars were behind the construction of the instrument.

32 years of the Bamboo Organ Festival

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

"YOU MAY NEVER HEAR THIS KIND OF music again, at least not in the Philippines."

This was the caveat thrown at media persons by concert pianist Della G. Besa in a press conference announcing the 32nd International Bamboo Festival.

This unique festival, which usually showcases highbrow music, will run on Feb. 22-March 1 at St. Joseph's Church in Las Piñas City, Metro Manila, home of the famous bamboo organ, which is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world.

Besa is the artistic director of the festival. Other resource persons during the presscon—held at the Arzobispado de Manila in Intramuros—were Msgr. Albert A. Venus, president of the Bamboo Organ Foundation, and concert organist Armando Salarza.

"We will be playing Baroque music in a non-traditional way, in unusual settings," Besa said. "For example, Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 is usually for a small orchestra but we will be playing it as transcribed [by M. Reger] for the piano, and for four hands."

The Bach masterpiece will be interpreted by pianists Anamaria G. de Guzman and Najib Ismail.

Another major piece is Bach's Cantata No. 52, with Salarza at the organ, De Guzman and Ismail at the piano, guitarists Sixto E. Roxas and Ruben Reyes, soprano Camille Lopez, the celebrated Las Piñas Boys Choir, and the festival orchestra directed by Jonathan Velasco.

Feb. 26 will be "An Evening of Organ Music," with guest organist Dalibor Miklavcic of Slovenia.

It will not be all longhair music, however. On Feb. 24, there will be a "Concert Under the Trees," which is now becoming a traditional feature. It will feature jazz music as dished out by Rico J. Puno, Jacqui Magno, Rita Daniela Iringan and Christine Love Marcaida.

"Fiesta Musika" on Feb. 27 will be devoted to the music of National Artist Lucio D. San Pedro, including famous songs like "Sa Ugoy ng Duyan," Missa Breve and "Hossana." The latter will feature organist Salarza, clarinetist Randy Lopez, tenor Abdul Candao, pianist Ismail, and the Las Piñas Boys Choir.

The festival closes March 1 with an ode to St. Cecilia, the traditional patroness of music.

During the presscon, Salarza confirmed that the bamboo organ of the Las Piñas church was the only one of its kind in the world. Craftsmen in Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan tried to replicate this, the organist said, but they failed.

The organ has a total of 1,031 pipes, of which 902 are bamboo; the rest are metal.

For the national treasure that is the bamboo organ, we must give thanks to Fr. Diego Sera, who took eight years to complete the organ, from 1816 to 1824.

Incidentally or not, another parish priest of the Las Piñas church (in 1876-1879, when the town was visited by various disasters) is Fr. Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian, who was beatified in 1975 and canonized in 1992 by Pope John Paul II.

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From page C1

uniqueness of the Filipino *rondalla* as a national heritage with a long tradition evolving from the Spanish and Latin American *comparsa* and *estudiantina*, which the *rondalla* has adapted to express a nationally specific consciousness.

The concert is part of the cultural season of the Silliman University Cultural Affairs Committee, to coincide with the ongoing National Arts Month.

Tickets are available at the College of Performing Arts, the Luce Auditorium and at the theater lobby before the show. Season passes are honored. Call (035) 4226002 loc. 520.

QUARTETTE Phoenix of Russia

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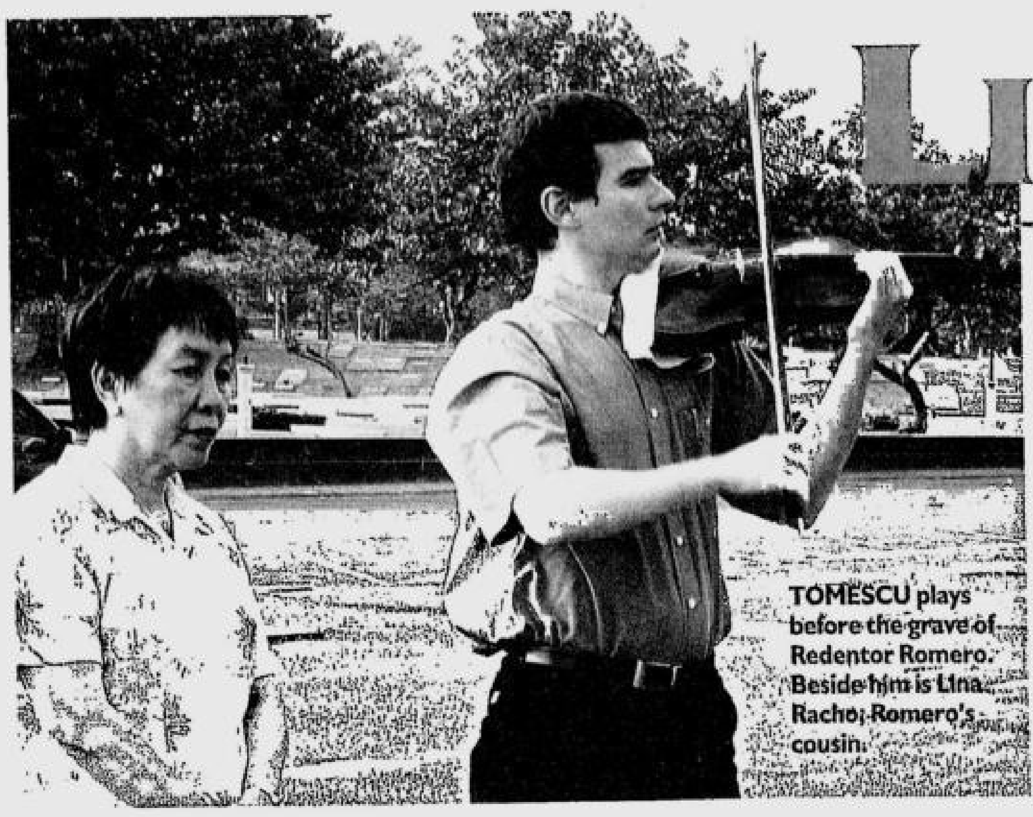
Romanian violinist's tribute to Redentor Romero



TOMESCU plays before the grave of Redentor Romero. Beside him is Lina Racho, Romero's cousin.

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

Alexandru Tomescu to perform in Manila, Negros and Nueva Ecija

MANY YEARS BACK AT THE CULtural Center of the Philippines Main Theater, during a curtain call of "La Traviata" featuring an American Violetta and a Filipino Alfredo, the unexpected happened.

Shortly after the heroine cried, "*O gioia*," on a high B flat and fell "lifeless" on the floor, shouts of "Bravo!" filled the air.

Then from the audience rose a bespectacled man in a plain shirt and dark pants. He dashed to the stage through the side stairs and forthwith offered a bouquet of flowers to the diva.

In an act that must have startled the singer, the man fell on his knees and then proceeded to kiss the tip of the singer's floor-length attire—the way a religious devotee would rub his cheek on a religious icon's habiliment.

The man who pulled off that seemingly mindless act didn't happen to be a theater outsider. He was a writer of consequence acting out a literary passage from Dostoyevsky's "The Idiot," and he happened to be the opera's translator and director.

He must have felt the singer transcended

ROMANIAN/ D3

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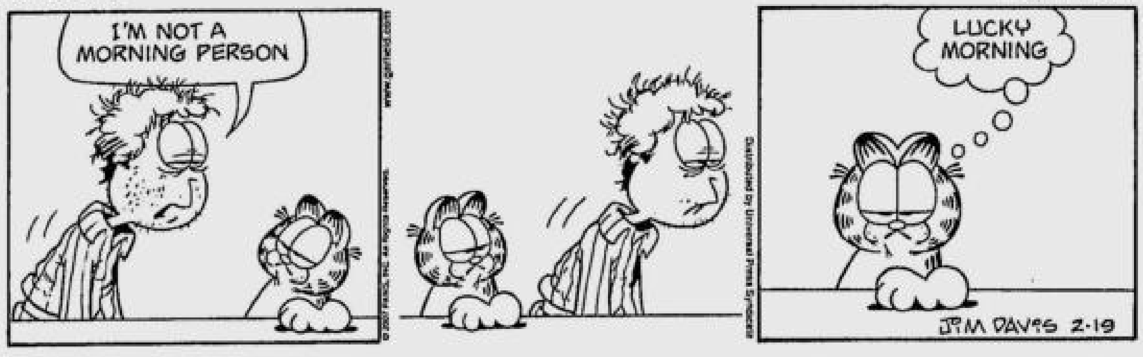
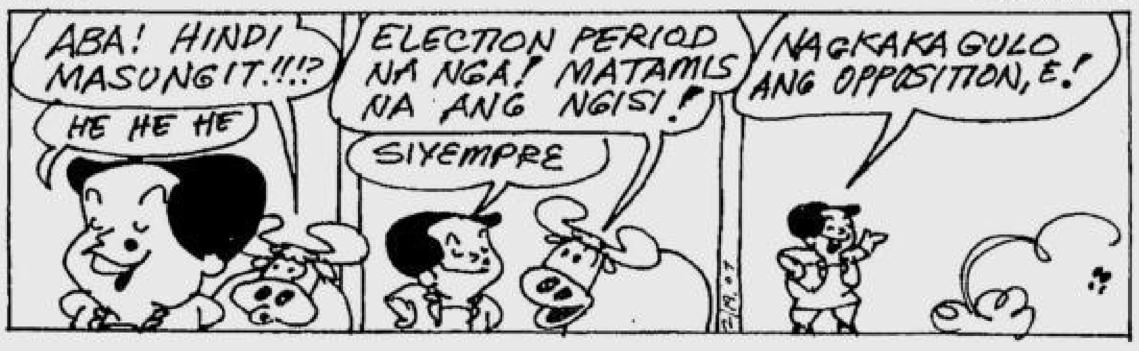
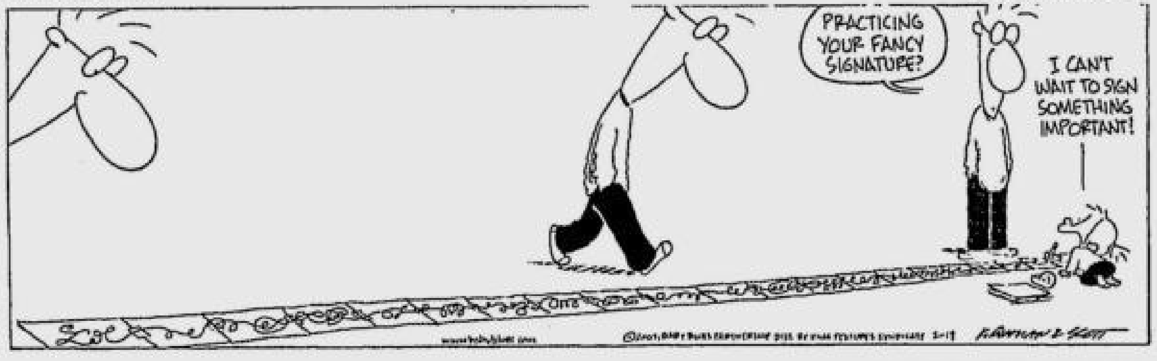

I'M NOT A MORNING PERSON
LUCKY MORNING
JIM DAVIS 2-19

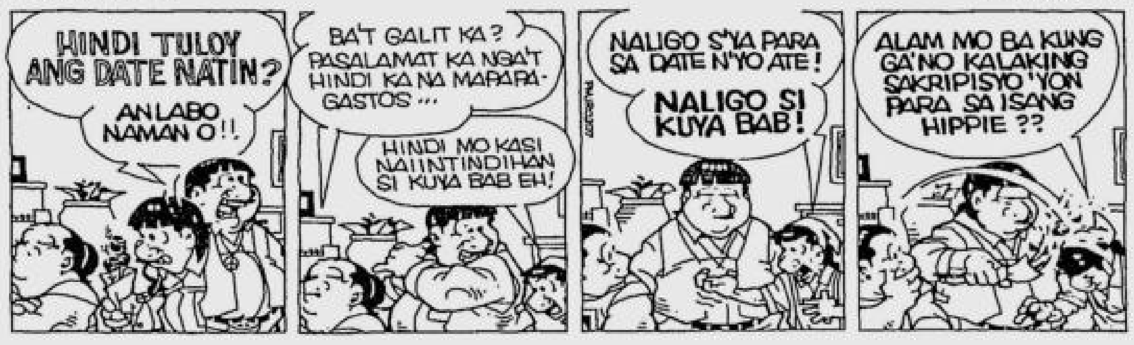
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ABA! HINDI MASUNGIT.!!!?
HE HE HE
ELECTION PERIOD NA NGA! MATAMIS NA ANG NGISI!
SIYEMPRE
NAGKAKAGULO ANG OPPOSITION, E!

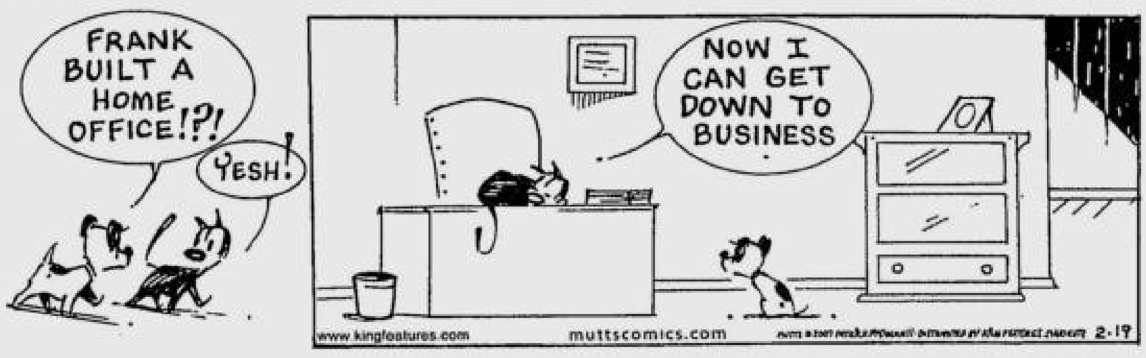
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


PRACTICING YOUR FANCY SIGNATURE?
I CAN'T WAIT TO SIGN SOMETHING IMPORTANT!

PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


HINDI TULOY ANG DATE NATIN?
ANLABO NAMAN O!!
BA'T GALIT KA? PASALAMAT KA NGA'T HINDI KA NA MAPAPAGASTOS ...
HINDI MO KASI NAIINTINDIHAN SI KUYA BAB EH!
NALIGO S'YA PARA SA DATE N'YO ATE!
NALIGO SI KUYA BAB!
ALAM MO BA KUNG GA'NO KALAKING SAKRIPISYO 'YON PARA SA ISANG HIPPIE ??

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL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YESH!
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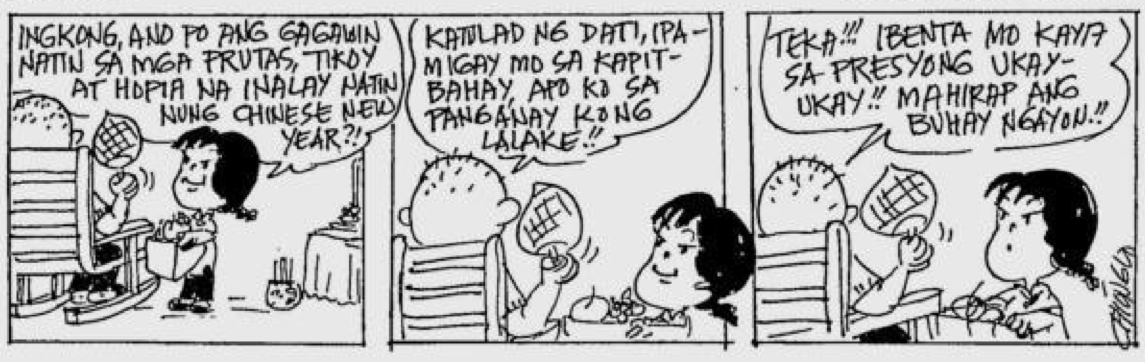
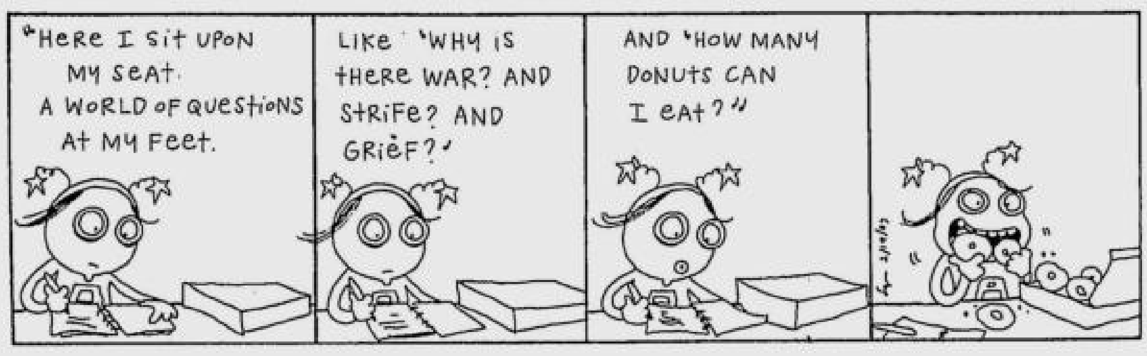
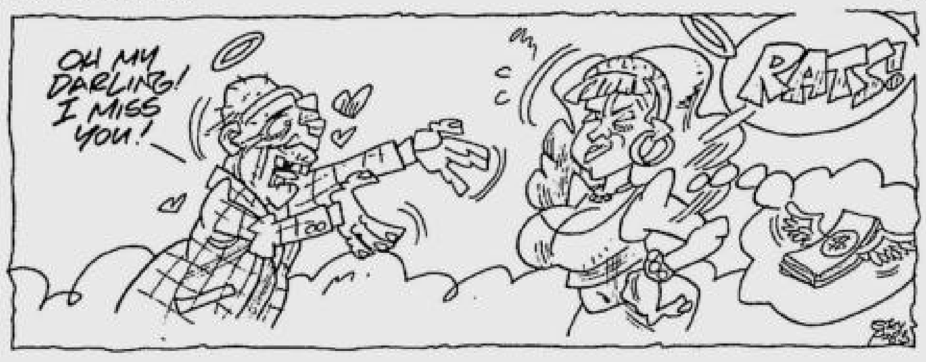
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


INGKONG, ANO PO ANG GAGAWIN NATIN SA MGA PRUTAS, TIKOY AT HOPIA NA INALAY NATIN NUNG CHINESE NEW YEAR?!
KATULAD NG DATI, IPAMIGAY MO SA KAPITBAHAY, APO KO SA PANGANAY KONG LALAKE!!
TEKA!!! IBENTA MO KAYA SA PRESYONG UKAY-UKAY!! MAHIRAP ANG BUHAY NGAYON!!

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

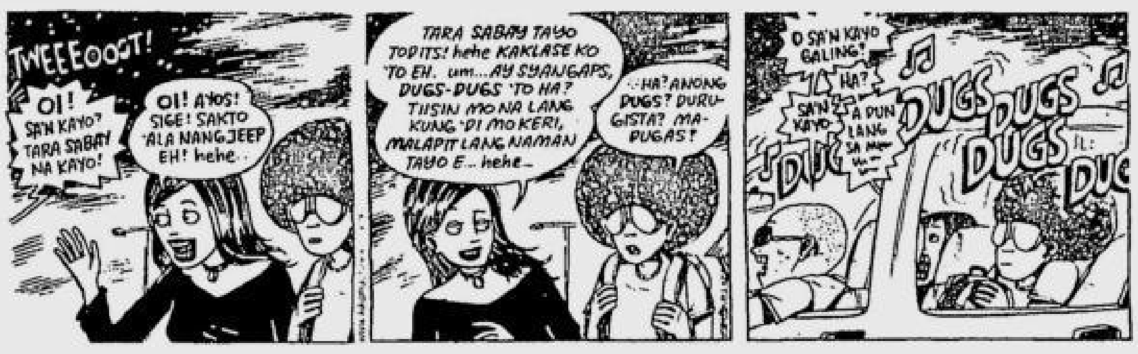

"Here I sit upon my seat. A world of questions at my feet.
Like 'Why is there war? And strife? And grief?'
And 'How many donuts can I eat?"

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

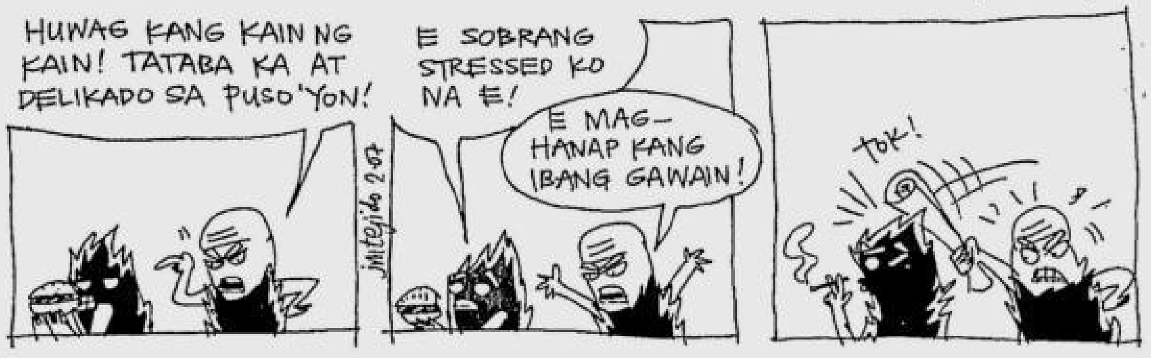

OH MY DARLING! I MISS YOU!
RATS!

AT MULING NAGTAGPO SI ANNA NICOLE SMITH AT ANG KANYANG MILYONARYONG ASAWA SA LANGIT

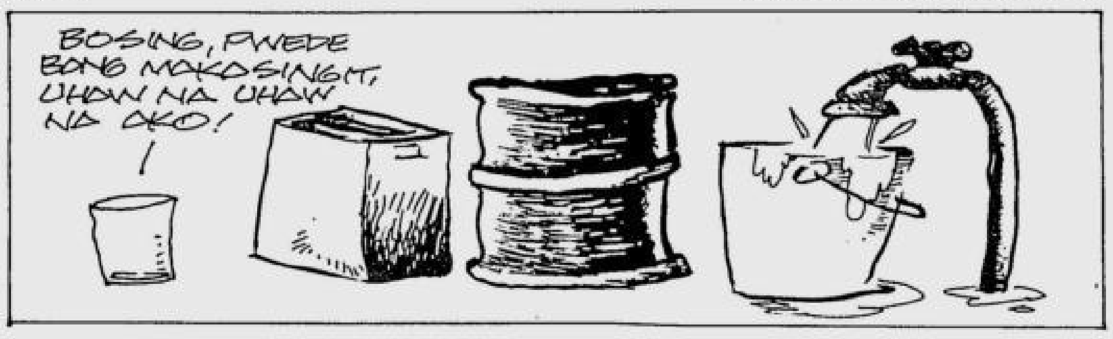
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


TWEEEOOOT!
OI! SA'N KAYO? TARA SABAY NA KAYO!
OI! AYOS! SIGE! SAKTO 'ALA NANG JEEP EH! hehe
TARA SABAY TAYO TODITS! hehe KAKLASE KO 'TO EH. um...AY SYANGAPS, DUGS-DUGS 'TO HA? TIISIN MO NA LANG KUNG 'DI MO KERI, MALAPIT LANG NAMAN TAYO E... hehe...
HA? ANONG DUGS? DURUGISTA? MA-DUGAS?
O SA'N KAYO GALING?
HA?
SA'N KAYO
A DUN LANG SA
DUGS DUGS DUGS DUGS

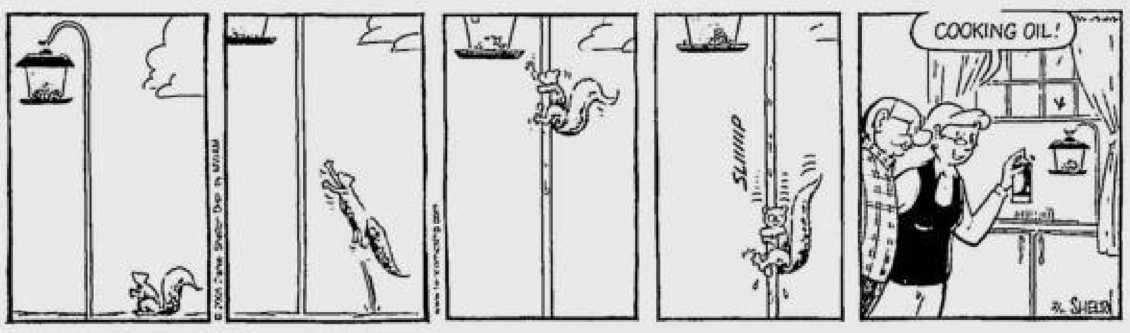
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


HUWAG KANG KAIN NG KAIN! TATABA KA AT DELIKADO SA PUSO'YON!
E SOBRANG STRESSED KO NA E!
E MAGHANAP KANG IBANG GAWAIN!
TOK!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


BOSING, PWEDE BONG MAKASINGIT, UHAW NA UHAW NA AKO!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


SLIIIIIP
COOKING OIL!

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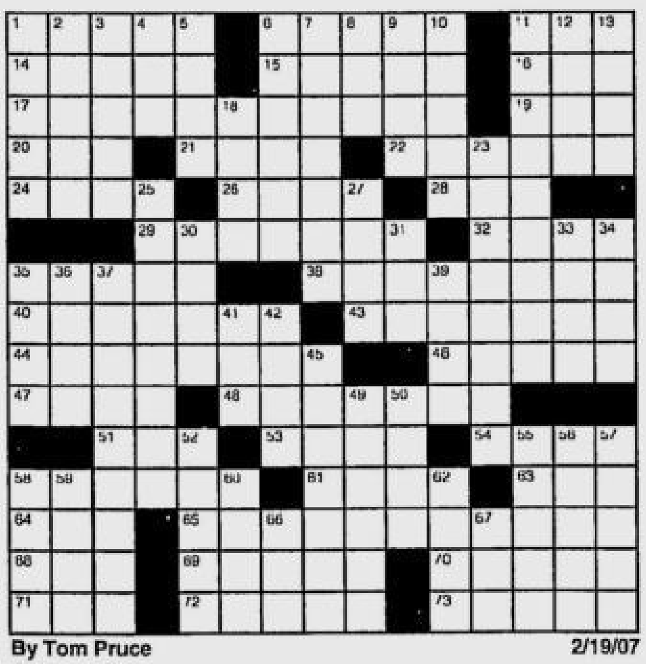
ACROSS
1 More adorable
6 Charger
11 Econ. meas.
14 Creative Muse
15 Medical prefix
16 "Norma __"
17 Kin of building blocks
19 Timetable abbr.
20 Hang behind
21 Film critic Pauline
22 Medium's milieu
24 Vamoose!
26 "Airplane!" star Robert
28 Monotonous routine
29 Bronx university
32 "__ brillig..."
35 Calyx segment
38 In matched pairings
40 Annual golf tourneys
43 Spherical
44 Successor of Tiberius
46 Speeder catcher
47 Jack up
48 Baloney!
51 Make a move
53 Pin box
54 Writer Ogden
58 My, my, my
61 With skill
63 Former PanAm rival
64 Classic Olds
65 Classic runabout
68 Gallery filler
69 Major artery
70 Twosomes
71 __ Alamos, NM
72 Throat prob.
73 Classic Alan Ladd movie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64 65 66 67
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71 72 73

By Tom Pruce
Chicago, IL
2/19/07

DOWN
1 Prison chambers
2 Bathsheba's husband
3 Ballroom dance
4 & so forth
5 Chess piece
6 Singer O'Connor
7 Hunt call
8 Ike's command
9 Work units
10 Medicine-giver
11 "American Gothic" painter
12 DEA operative
13 French father
18 Bert the Cowardly Lion
23 German highway
25 Belonging to the same class
27 Crooned
30 Fashion designer Cassini
31 Brooks of "High Anxiety"
33 Latin handle
34 Nostradamus, for one
35 Being as stated
36 Actor Morales
37 Speckled pattern
39 One-third of a WWII movie?
41 Crux
42 Slide sideways
45 Fertility goddess
49 Axle cover
50 __ E. Coyote
52 Mulberry bark
55 Courtyards
56 Under oath
57 Ship measure
58 Spoken
59 Rescuer
60 Public disorder
62 Jabbers
66 Make a mistake
67 Stadium cheer

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

M	A	S	C	O	T		A	L	G		H	A	R	T
A	L	P	I	N	E		T	A	R	P	A	P	E	R
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T	A	S	S	E	L	E	D		S	I	E	N	N	A
E	X	E	S		S	R	O		M	O	R	G	A	N

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2/19/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're daring, imaginative and bold. You're also a good judge of character. You have a strong drive for success, in part because you're competitive. Although you're romantic and adventurous, you're also a strong, practical realist. Others know they can count on you. This year you will have to face an important choice. Choose wisely. **Birthdate of:** Eddie Arcaro, horse jockey; Jeff Daniels, actor; Seal, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Some of you feel that a friendship or relationship is ending now. Perhaps it is. Don't hold on out of desperation. That will only make things worse.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Refrain from being too demanding with a friend today because you want your own way. To keep friends, you have to know when to hold and when to fold.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a poor day for serious discussions with parents and bosses. You're not in the mood to compromise. You feel too intense to be agreeable and accommodating.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Avoid political and religious arguments today. There's just no point. Besides, there are none so deaf as those who are wearing headphones.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a poor day to discuss shared possessions or how to share responsibilities or jointly held property. You feel very passionate about something. (You might want to lighten up a bit.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Romance and love affairs are definitely passionate today. Something intense is developing. Learn to go with the flow. You can't make things stay the same.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is an excellent day to clean up and get rid of whatever you don't need. Be ruthless. Your surroundings affect you. This is a good chance to reduce the clutter in your life.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Romantic relationships are very passionate and intense today. Try not to overreact to anything that upsets you. Don't destroy the good will you already have.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Family discussions are pretty hot today. Instead, channel this intense energy into cleaning up things at home and getting rid of useless items.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're tempted to try to convince others to agree with you today. You want to win any argument. Actually, you might simply push others away from you. (Think about this.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Something obsesses you today. You want to buy something because you feel you have to have it. This isn't the best frame of mind under which to spend your money. (Ya think?)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Relationships could break down today because one party insists on holding on too tightly. All relationships need breathing space. If you smother someone, you'll only begin to destroy what you already have.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

9		8				7		4
			3	7	5			
7				4				5
	2	7				3	5	
			2		9			
	8	9				1	4	
2				3				7
			1	2	6			
1		3				2		8

Difficulty Level ★
2/19

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

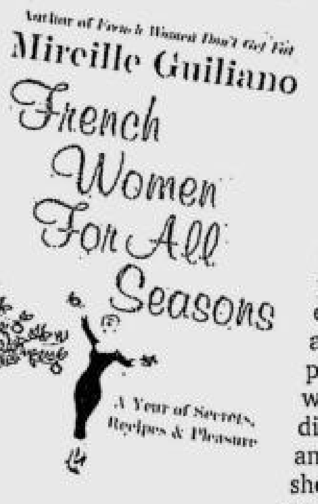
Answer to previous puzzle

9	6	8	2	4	5	3	1	7
1	4	3	6	8	7	2	5	9
2	7	5	3	1	9	8	6	4
3	2	4	5	9	8	1	7	6
5	9	7	1	2	6	4	8	3
8	1	6	7	3	4	9	2	5
4	5	9	8	7	2	6	3	1
7	3	2	9	6	1	5	4	8
6	8	1	4	5	3	7	9	2

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Good books, *good life*

HERE ARE SOME TITLES available at Fully Booked.


Author of French Women Don't Get Fat
Mireille Guiliano
French Women For All Seasons
A Year of Secrets, Recipes & Pleasure

'French Women for All Seasons: A Year of Secrets, Recipes & Pleasure'

By Mireille Guiliano

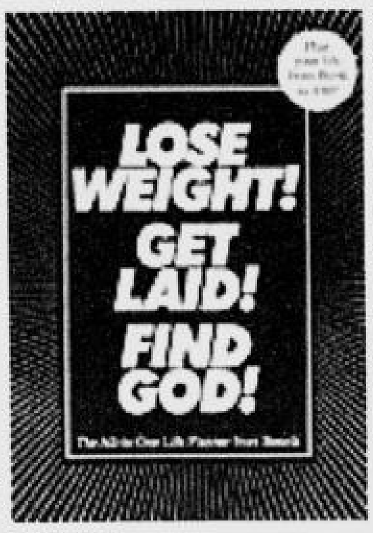
This buoyant new book, brims with author Mireille Guiliano's tips and tricks for living with pleasure and style, sans the extra weight. Here are four full seasons of strategies for shopping, cooking and moving throughout the year, applying the French woman's ideal of balancing pleasure and practicality.

Lose Weight! Get Laid! Find God!

By Benrik

This is a guide to all the essential stages of life, one year at a time from 0 to 100, along with full-color tips that will ensure each year of your existence makes an indelible impression. Example: at age 15, Rebel against society. Procreate at age 30, and fight the flab at 48.

From your birth to your midlife crisis, from losing your virginity to disinheriting your grandchildren, this book will tell you how to lead the hysterical life you so richly deserve.

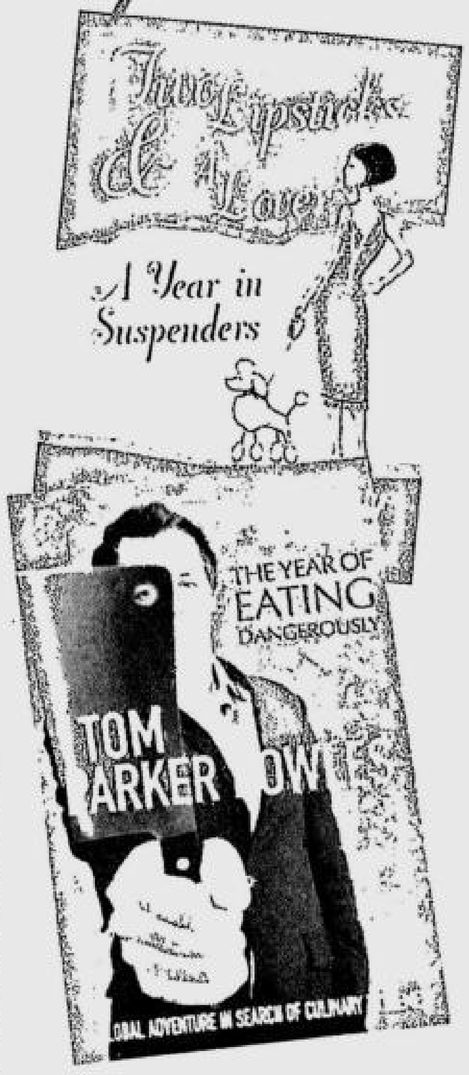


Two Lipsticks and a Lover

By Helena Frith Powell

Travel and lifestyle journalist Helena Frith Powell goes behind the scenes to investigate the famous French adage: "*je ne sais quoi.*"

Talking to fashion gurus, beauty experts and It Girls, professional seducers, lingerie designers and personal shoppers, she discovers a whole new world of indispensable wardrobe and beauty secrets, shopping done the right way and exercise routines promising lasting success, family life, relationships and clandestine affaires.


Two Lipsticks & a Lover
A Year in Suspenders
THE YEAR OF EATING DANGEROUSLY
TOM PARKER BOWLES
GLOBAL ADVENTURE IN SEARCH OF CULINARY

The Year of Eating Dangerously

by Tom Parker Bowles

"The Year of Eating Dangerously" is an account of Tom Parker Bowle's global odyssey in search of culinary extremes. He sets out to discover the most exotic food from around the world. From the dangers of West-country elvers and the French song-birds that are the ultimate in endangered gastronomy, to the Masai warriors and their bloody feasts, "The Year of Eating Dangerously" is a fantastically written, extremely funny and often provocative read that will make your mouth water, at least most of the time.

Fully Booked has branches in Power Plant Mall, Rockwell (tel. 7565001); The Promenade, Greenhills (7214757); Gateway Mall (9114960); The Block, SM North (4420107); 4/F, Rustan's, Makati (8151901); and SM Mall of Asia (5560264). Visit www.fullybookedonline. com

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Nicole Schulze
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Monique Lhuillier's 2007 BRIDAL COLLECTION
Best color trends
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WILL IT BE A CLASSIC Filipiniana affair with shades of white, ecru and mother-of-pearl? An elegant Renaissance celebration in coral, mocha and silver?

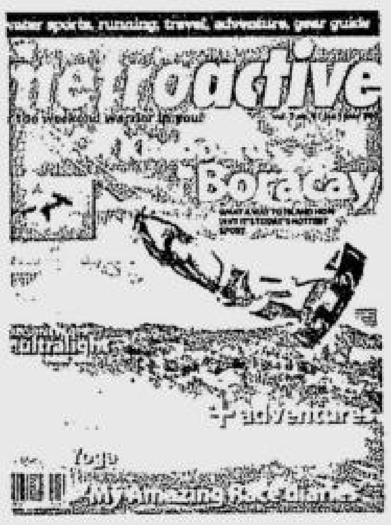
How about an al fresco feast in champagne, lime and plum, or a chic city party in hip shades of canary yellow, pool blue and silver?

Choose your hues, and make your wedding truly yours—get hundreds of tips, ideas and all the help you need from the fabulous new issue of Metro Weddings, the comprehensive twice-yearly bridal bible from ABS-CBN Publishing.

Lovely bride Nicole Schulze shares her love story with husband, Jamie Lopez in this issue that's packed with over 53 wedding gown ideas, a listing of the perfect garden, hotel and clubhouse reception venues, and how-to's for having your perfect wedding and staying within budget. Also featured is Monique Lhuillier's 2007 bridal collection. There's also a national supplier directory.

Metro Weddings January-June 2007 issue is available nationwide.

Focus on kite-boarding



THE NEW ISSUE OF METROACtive, the adventure, travel and extreme sports magazine features today's hot sport—kite boarding.

Other features: swim fin-to-fin with hammerheads in the Costa Rican island of Cocos; defy your fear of heights and fly for the very first time in the barest of planes; scale Mt. Kilimanjaro and conquer one of the Seven Summits; and go behind the scenes of "The Amazing Race Asia."

Metro Active's first quarter issue is available in newsstands nationwide. Call 4152272 local 4665.

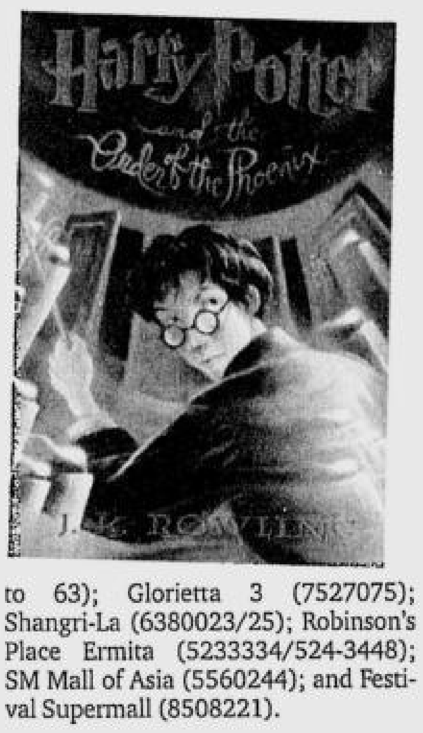
February book picks

THIS MONTH, THE POWER-Book club focuses on two gripping novels from J.K. Rowling's wildly successful seven-part series.

The hefty fifth installment, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," presents a uniquely psychological and intensely dark turn, as our boy wizard finds himself at odds with his own identity as well as with the reliability of the very organization that governs the magical world.

The Harry Potter saga continues with "Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince." After months of frenzied anticipation and wild speculation about the identity of the Half-Blood Prince, the numerous bombshells and incredible plot twists will leave readers as shocked and stunned as they are utterly satisfied. With only one book to go before the series' projected conclusion, Rowling masterfully sets the stage for what will surely be an epic battle to end all battles.

PowerBooks specialty store invites readers to participate in an in-depth discussion of two of the most absorbing books ever penned. The PowerBook Club will meet on Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m., at PowerBooks Greenbelt for "Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix"; and on Feb. 28, 6:30 p.m., at PowerBooks Megamall for "Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince."



PowerBooks Specialty Store is a complete one-stop bookstore with branches at Greenbelt 4 (tel. 7576428 to 29); SM Megamall (6352898 to 99); Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63); Glorietta 3 (7527075); Shangri-La (6380023/25); Robinson's Place Ermita (5233334/524-3448); SM Mall of Asia (5560244); and Festival Supermall (8508221).

'High School Musical' opens Feb. 23

A GREAT WAY TO INTRODUCE KIDS TO the magic of theater is to bring them to watch the stage version of Disney's "High School Musical," which will run for two weekends from Feb. 23-March 4, at the SM Megamall Cinema 4.

This is the officially licensed stage adaptation of Disney's wildly popular movie "High School Musical" and is making its Asian premiere here in Manila.

Popular teen star Karel Marquez heads the cast of 44, playing the female lead Gabriella Montez opposite Shark Alonzo who plays basketball jock Troy Bolton. The sister-and-brother team of Ryan and Sharpay Evans is played by Jaime Barcelon (last seen as Rolf in Repertory Philippines' "The Sound of Music") and Yen Morada.

Presented by Blue Repertory, in cooperation with Cebu-based producer Hendri Go of Little Boy Productions, Disney's "High School Musical" includes hit songs from the popular movie such as "Getcha Head in the Game," "We're All In This Together," "Stick to the Status Quo" and "Breaking Free."

Chari Arespacochaga directs, with Mio Infante as set designer and Johnsy Reyes as lighting designer. Pinoy Dream Academy's Dan Cabrera is choreographer and Kundirana alumni Felix Rivera is musical director.

Call 8919999 or visit www.ticketworld.com.ph.

Romanian violinist's tribute to Redentor Romero

From page D1

all mortal expectations and she became a goddess fit for worship during the curtain call.

The man was Rolando Tinio, now National Artist for Theater and Literature.

Another supreme tribute to another artist that touched me was when the Romanian violinist Alexandru Tomescu visited the grave of the late conductor-violinist Redentor Romero.

Tomescu—who will be heard at the Philamlife Theater on Feb. 24 with pianist Mary Anne Espina—didn't just pray on the grave. He also played Romero's favorite arrangement of Constancio de Guzman's "Bayan Ko."

"It was the least I could do for him," said Tomescu, who added the Filipino conductor and impresario had introduced him to Filipino audiences in 1999.

Tomescu met Romero in the summer of 1996 in Bucharest to play the opening concert of a violin competition. The designated conductor didn't show up and Romero saved the situation by leading the orchestra on instant notice.

Recalled Tomescu: "Maestro Romero made music-making happen instantly and without effort. The total transformation of the orchestra was unbelievable. I'd like to believe it would compare with the Vienna Philharmonic or the Berlin Philharmonic in the orchestra's best seven days."

Some 11 years have passed since that meeting and Tomescu has realized that their partnership in the Mozart concerto actually paved the way for a beautiful friendship. It was not an easy friendship.

"Onstage as well as in everyday life, maestro Romero was quite demanding, but that's what I liked about him," Tomescu said. "I knew that behind all that, there was a warm and passionate heart, a true Filipino heart. He also taught me what the power of conviction means, what believing in music means. Death cannot stop a big passion. I am sure that when I play for Filipino audiences this week, maestro Romero would remain a musician and he would listen to every note I play."

PIANIST Mary Anne Espina

The Manila and Bacolod City performances of Tomescu are sponsored by the Philippine American Life Insurance Company and the Manila Pavilion Hotel. For tickets to the Manila and Bacolod City performances, 9007023 or 0906-5104270.

Meanwhile, the Nueva Ecija concert of Tomescu with pianist Espina in Palayan City on Feb. 26, 4 p.m., is through the initiative of professor Trinidad V. Viloria, president emeritus of the Cabanatuan City Heritage Foundation.

Helping her are Annaliza Eugenio, supervising tourism officer, and Avelino Balaria, managing director of the NE Convention Center.

The concert will have the special participation of the College of the Immaculate Conception Chorale.

Piano festival

The Piano Teachers Guild of the Philippines (PTGP) will hold a piano festival, Feb. 24-25, at the Philamlife Theater. The PTGP was organized in 1972 and has since been promoting the piano profession and fostering goodwill among piano teachers.

The guild, now headed by Fr. Manuel Maramba, OSB, has the following officers: Sr. Mary Placid Abejo, Mauricia Boromeo, Gloria Austria, Jed Balsamo, Anthony Say, George Ong, Najib Ismail, Mary Anne Espina, Carmencita Arambulo, Rosemarie de la Paz, Leonardo Guilang, Aristotle Molina, Evelyn Onquillo and Ruby Salvosa.

Bacolod arts fair

The First National Arts Fair will open in Bacolod City, Feb. 28-March 3, and will see the gathering of gallery owners, collectors, art brokers and artists all over the country.

Aside from exhibits, the fair will also be highlighted by symposia and workshops on the arts and art management. This is a joint undertaking of the Negros Cultural Foundation and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Roces 'zarzuela' in NY

"Something to Crow about," a new *zarzuela* based on the writing of National Artist Alejandro Roces, will be heard at La Mama Theater in New York on June 21-24. Music and lyrics is by Ferdinand Dimadura, orchestration by Nonoy Diestro, and music supervision by Raul Sunico.

The New York run of the *zarzuela* is made possible by the Unesco International Theater Institute-Philippine Center, Dialect-Earthsavers Dream Academy, Philippine Consulate General of New York City and La Mama Theater.

Intimate concert at GSIS

The GSIS Museum becomes an intimate concert venue with a special concert called "Night at the Museum," on Feb. 20, 6 p.m.

Featured artists are flutist Ray Sison and pianists Jonathan Coo and Charisse Dumlao.

Free admission.

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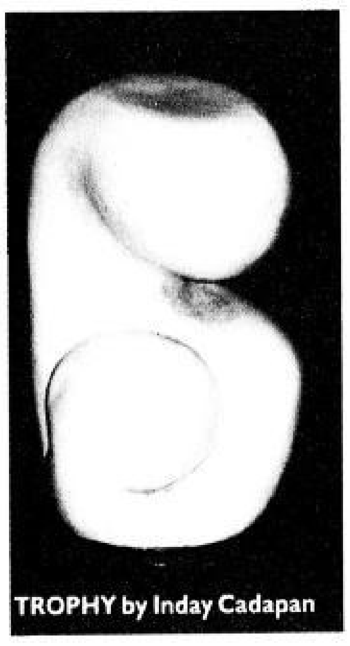
Awards for women in media launched



TROPHY by Inday Cadapan

THE WOMEN IN MEDIA program of ST. Scholastica's College (SSC) will stage the first Hildegard Awards for Women in Media and Communication on March 5, at St. Cecilia's Hall of the SSC campus along Leon Guinto in Manila.

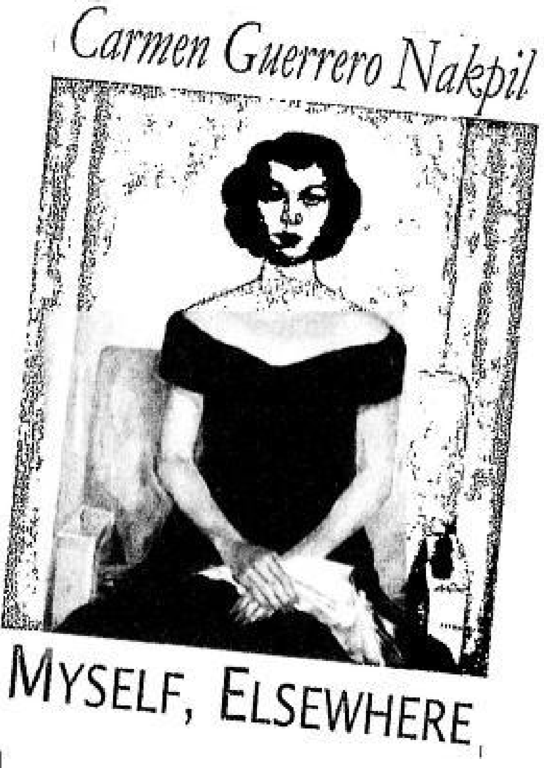
The award is named after Hildegard of Bingen, Germany, a 12th-century woman writer, poet, musician, artist, environmentalist and Benedictine mystic whose counsel was sought by kings and popes.

The first batch of Hildegard awardees will receive trophy sculptures designed by the late Inday Cadapan and recast by Frederic Caedo.

The Ermita in her mind

"Myself, Elsewhere"
By Carmen Guerrero Nakpil
Nakpil Publishing, San Juan,
2006, 191 pages

By Ruel S. De Vera



A STRIKING PORTRAIT OF the striking author dominates the cover of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's eighth book, the memoir "Myself, Elsewhere."

The image is a painting of Nakpil by the late National Artist Vicente Manansala done in 1949. One can almost feel the intensity and the intelligence blazing from the subject's eyes, though she is sitting still.

Carmen Guerrero Nakpil applies her undiminished powers to remembering her life and her beloved Manila district in this slender, superlative memoir

The intensity in the book itself rises like a flare from the time before the painting's creation. A completely new work, "Myself" begins with her birth in 1922 and concludes in 1945 as Manila lay fallen from the devastation of the Second World War.

The ruin that befell the city caps Nakpil's recollection of her life and that of her environs, all told in crisp, clear and compelling prose, as can only be expected from the author of such books as "The Rice Conspiracy" and "A Question of Identity." This is just the beginning, as "Myself" is intended to be just the first salvo in a trilogy that should chronicle Nakpil's eventful life.

Nakpil remembers with trademark polish and perspective the war: "The destruction was of biblical proportions. Not a stone upon a stone was left. The few photographs in this book were donated by kind relatives and friends whose houses and memorabilia happened to be north of the Pasig, and understood that, more than food, drink and a roof, we needed our memories."

Those photographs help immensely, but in truth, Nakpil's prose practically teleports the reader to the optimistic and open era from the 1920s to the '40s. She writes superbly self-aware from that time, as she was growing up, and also from a future viewpoint for proper context. This dexterous bit of time-travel enriches the book's narrative, making it both fond and yet reflective, a gambit of chronal symphony, if you may.

The book begins on an alluring note, with Nakpil writing about Ermita, and her family's rhythms as a prominent family of Ermitenses.

"I write about my years in Ermita before World War II, not with the usual maudlin, nostalgic weakness for the past, but in profound affection for that lost time and place," she explains.

And what a place and time she remembers. "The thing about old Ermita is that it was an unplanned, quintessential, small town of the kind modern planners have been offering their clients as the optimum, urban unit," she writes. "Ermita could have taught them a thing or two. We were a racial, economic and social mix of people who happened to live together according to unwritten rules, in a compact township where everyone knew almost everyone else and anything we needed was just a stone's throw away. And we managed to be phenomenally pretty."

Copious research

Combining copious research with first-hand knowledge, Nakpil unravels the history of both Ermita itself and her most impressive family tree. She writes about the pillars of Ermita life, propriety and religion, as well as chronicles her emerging firebrand personality.

It was during the Guerreros' vibrant mealtime conversations that Nakpil "soon acquired the habit of being outspoken, frank, candid, of blurting out my opinions without reservations or ill will."

She adroitly applies that candor to vivid profiles of her family and piercing observations of everyday life. Nakpil plunges full-bodied into questions of society and existence with aplomb and honesty.

"Why did being Filipino include so much pain and suffering?" she asks. "It took me a long time to realize that all those displays of tough, patriotic love were meant to inoculate me against the rigors that face all other Filipinos."

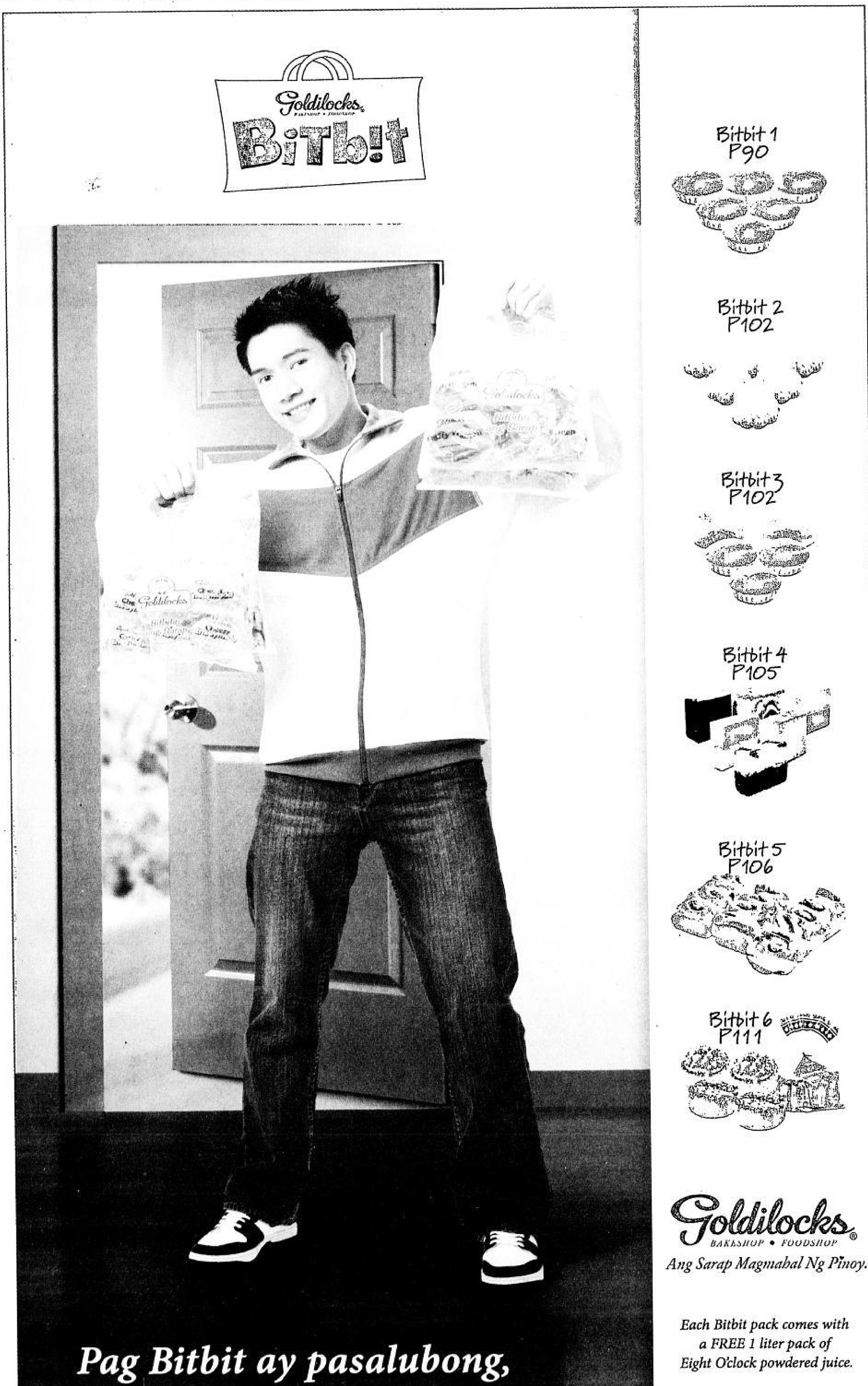
As a flipside to her unobstructed affection for prewar Ermita, Nakpil's scant recollections about World War II stand as a testament to the tragedies she suffered—she lost many loved ones, most notably her first husband, Toto Cruz, when she was just 22 and the Japanese war machine was rolling through Manila.

That pain is most evident in the book's fragmented last fourth, which ends abruptly. Readers will absorb Nakpil's shock and awe at the swift finality of it all.

"I find it hard to write about WWII because, 64 years after the first bombing of Manila in January 1942, I have not got over it," she admits. "At first, I took refuge in a self-inflicted kind of amnesia. Now, having spent more than half a century banishing all thought and remembrance of it, refusing to talk, read or write about it, I have succeeded so well that I can remember, even after great effort, very little about those years."

Though readers will have to wait to read the continuation of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's autobiographical writing, "Myself, Elsewhere," by itself, is a remarkable book that celebrates a time and place lost but lamented, a volume that honestly and intricately examines the start and the storms experienced by a remarkable woman.

Available in paperback at leading bookstores.



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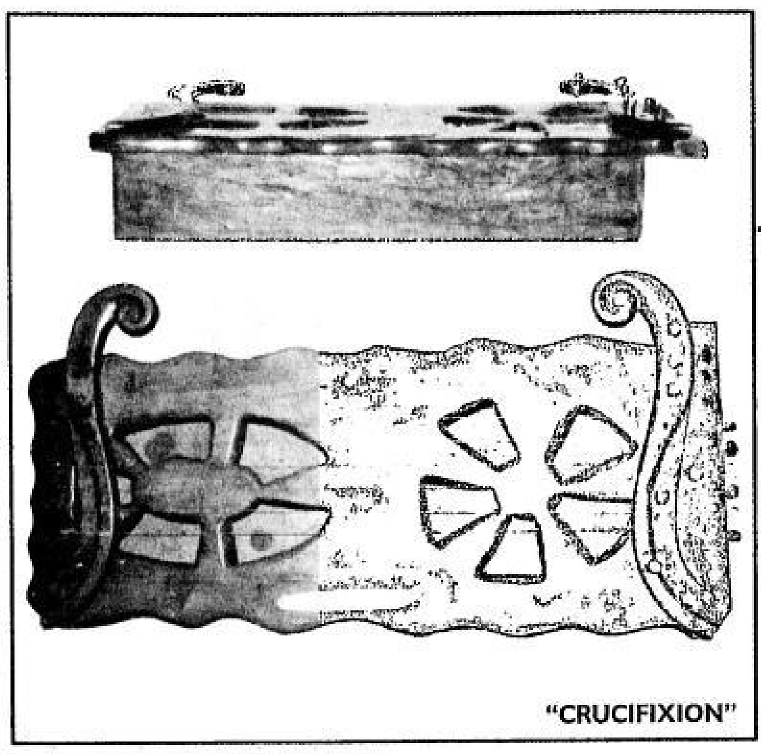
LifeStyle

Foreign affairs

HENRI ETEVE

The Frenchman cometh



"CRUCIFIXION"

By Dexter R. Matilla
Contributor

FRENCHMAN HENri Eteve is an artist whose imagination is as wide as the cosmos from which he gets most of his inspiration.

His "Versatility Show," on spotlight at Avellana Art Gallery in Pasay, clearly proves it.

The 65 art pieces (a coincidence, he says) may very well be a personal homage to himself—one for every year since being born in Paris "as the bombs of World War II were falling upon it."

Eteve, who has been based in Manila for the past 40 years, chose the name Di Meliora, or "for the better," as his pseudonym.

The reason for this, he says, is that he differentiates the artist and the work from the person. He believes that an artist can be a totally different persona compared to who he is in reality.

Just as the name suggests, Eteve's versatility in his choice of art forms is a result of his subconscious taking over.

The paintings, sculptures, tapestry and mixed-media works that make up most of the collection displays his unconstrained imagination.

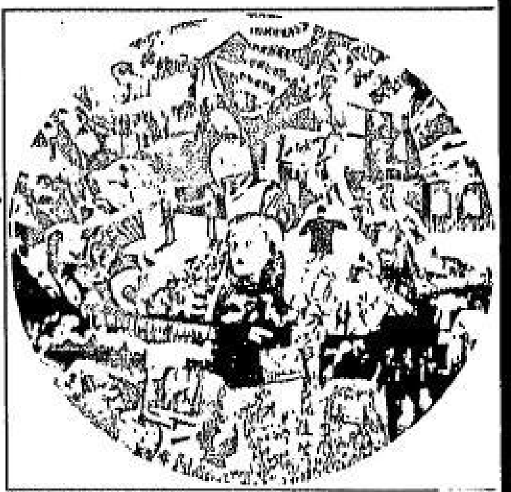
Eteve made his way to the Philippines as a free soul. But his interest in art started quite early, while living close to the Sacred Heart near Montmarte-La Place du Tertre, where artists were living ever since the beginning of the Impressionist movement.

He joined the French Foreign Legion and was sent to the Algerian War. After fulfilling his duties, he found he could no longer re-inject himself to civilian life. The war affected him very badly and the only solution for any one to find themselves once again, he says, was simply to travel.

"When you travel, you see many different things and your problems disappear," he says. "It's like renewing yourself."

With just a backpack and a little money, he boarded a ship and traveled to the Middle East, passing by countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Jordan before finally settling in the Philippines.

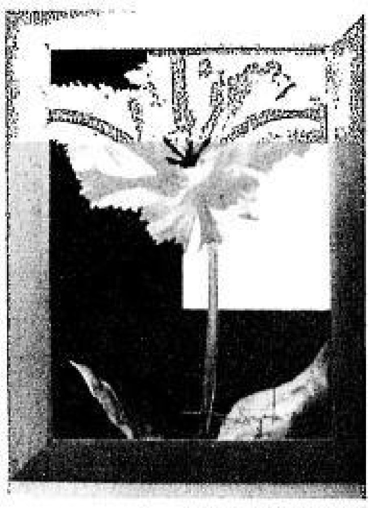
THE FRENCHMAN/ E2

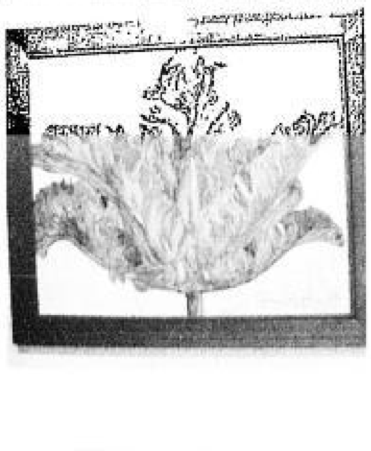


"BALLROOM Dancing"

From Indonesia with love

An identity struggle and love for flowers and Jesus inspire Sasya Tranggono's art





By Pam Pastor

SASYA TRANGGONO WAS born into a Javanese family preoccupied with beauty.

Her parents are behind one of Indonesia's leading cosmetics brands. But Sasya found another way to add beauty to the world—through her brushstrokes.

The Indonesian artist was invited by Ayala Museum to bring her works to the country and share them with Filipinos. Her show, "From Indonesia with Love," which runs until Feb. 25, features paintings that she says are inspired "by flowers and Jesus."

Through paintings of brightly colored flowers, Sasya is able to convey femininity, intimacy, love, joy and even wistfulness.

Sasya says she is inspired by 'everything around her—"gardens, traveling, designers, even clothing."

Although born in Indonesia, Saysa also spent time in the West, studying engineering in the United States and earning her MBA in The Netherlands. "I did not feel Indonesian then. I went abroad to study when I was barely 18 and I became almost Western," she says.

But returning to Indonesia brought her back to her roots. "I am an Indonesian and a Javanese."

This identity struggle comes into play in her artwork as well. "The colors I use aren't colors that most Indonesian artists would use. I use bright colors, they like subdued tones. I paint flowers in

FROM/ E2

SURROUNDED. Sasya says she is inspired by everything around her.

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

Catch Juris and Chin performing further chart toppers from New Horizon, their latest album from Ivory records.

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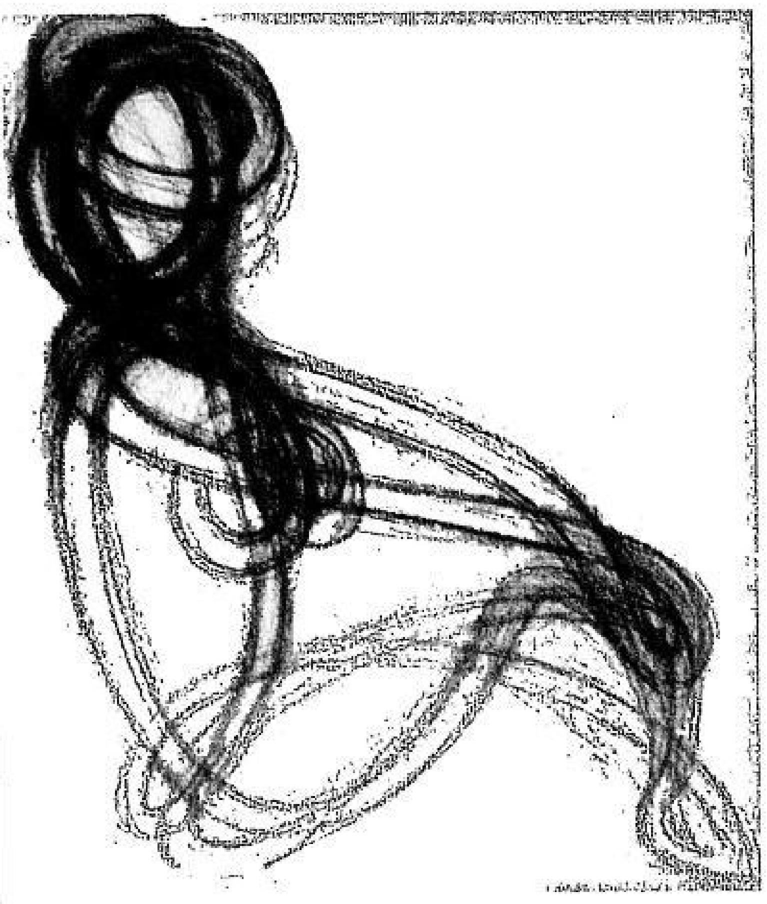


"INDIGO Girl" 1

Drilon's drawings and engagements

DRAWING IS ART'S FIRST ACT OF SUBVERSION: the small baby step to project representation onto blank space, the deed which defines the images to come. Drawing denotes both verb (in the act of marking surfaces with lines) and noun (in the subsequent image produced), the entire word encompassing process and output, ritual and object alike.

"Recent Drawings by Rock Drilon" similarly straddles such dichotomies: the images signifying not only the finished products but the continuing act of artistic engagement as well. The show itself comprises the first half of Drilon's two-part show at Mag:net Paseo: the latter being an exhibition of the artist's recent abstract paintings. Drilon attempts to connect the distinct artistic operations of drawing and painting by hinting at how each complements the other's representational value.

Produced over a period of two years, the drawings are produced not as separate works disjointed from the personal, psychological and philosophical aspects of the artist's life, but rather as visual extensions of it. Far from being academic exercises in technical fluency with pencil or charcoal on paper, a substantial portion of Drilon's drawings are culled from his daily chronicles in personal notebooks and are created in between bouts of writing, poetry, and recollections.

Drilon reworks the sketches simultaneously, recollecting past representations and adding or subtracting to the images as the flow and ebb of energy directs him to do.

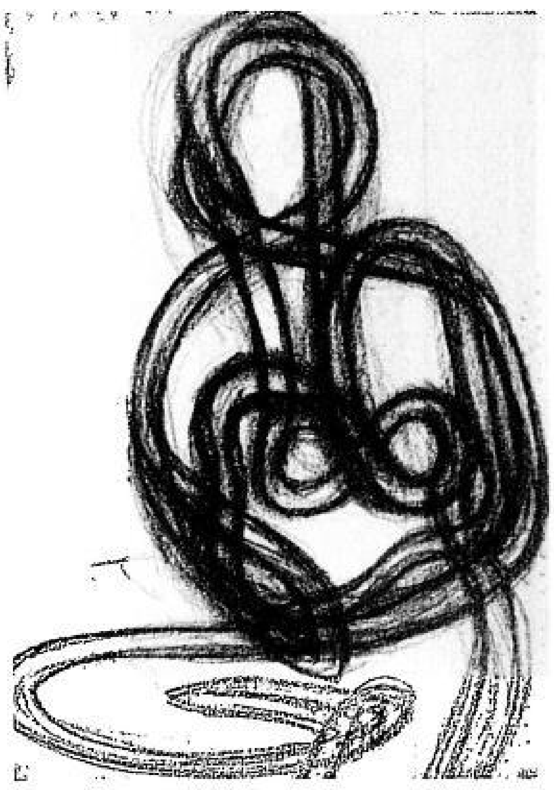
As the artist asserts, in the end, the drawing reveals itself and more often than not he finds himself as the "implementor" of a previously unforeseen design.

Hanging the works inside the gallery also employs a similar process of linear meanderings: The works are arranged horizontally, side by side, and collectively form a line that extends beyond the gallery's conventional space and into the bookshop beside.

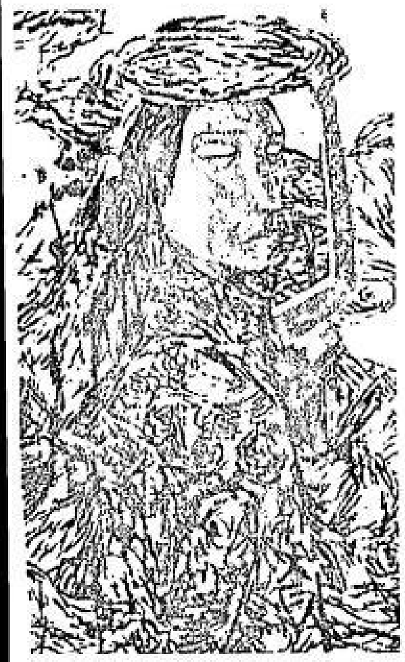
Also seen in this show are Drilon's initial explorations into how abstraction may denote the figurative: the human figure, for instance.

Produced under such circumstances, the drawings speak of entanglements, layerings, and unwindings as if to represent a collective process of rumination. They create structures that connect the recent and the past as "Onion" represents it, redirecting and refining paths toward their eventual resolution.

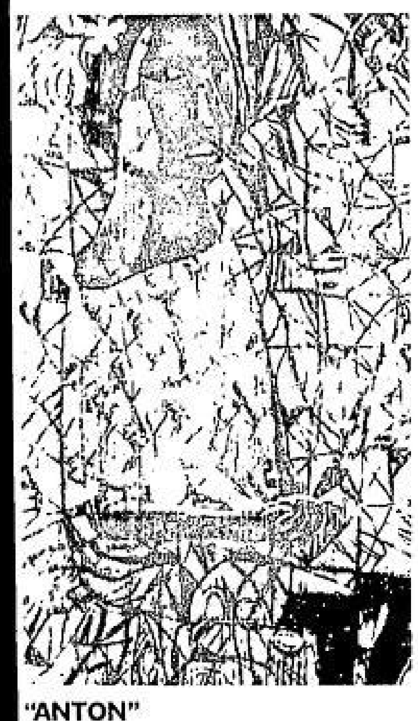
"Recent Drawings" runs Feb. 20-March 10 at Mag:net Gallery Paseo, Paseo de Roxas and Sedeno St., Makati City. Call 8177895 (Jhennie) or visit www.magnetcom.ph.



"INDIGO Girls" 2



"UNTITLED"



"ANTON"

Rodel Tapaya's sure touch of technique

By Constantino C. Tejero

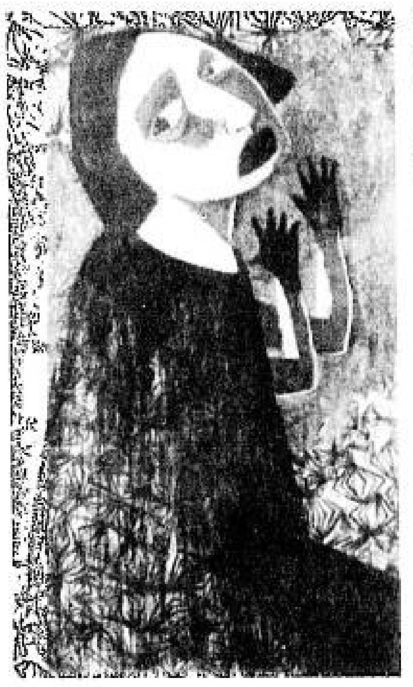
RODEL TAPAYA IS ONE OF our few young artists who consistently show a sure touch of technique even in their relative youth. His style and technique may change in time, but with every transmutation the sureness of touch remains.

We see this in his latest exhibit "Mapapel," 15 pieces in ink and acrylic on paper, until March 3 in The Drawing Room, Metrostar Building, 1007 Metropolitan Ave., Makati City.

The series of images, says the exhibition note, depicts characters, scenes and various narratives. But these are mostly portraits rendered in broad lines then washed with muted colors (slate-blue, olive-green, yellow-ochre, umber, blue-green, ink-blue, a lot of black and the off-white of exposed paper).

In some of these line drawings, we still find the artist's signature grid (which he associates with technology and modern civilization), as in the cubist portrait "Ang Paglulubog ng Bituing Makulit" and the haunting "Anton."

But in all he has abandoned his Dubuffet-style primitivist rendering of the human form. Instead of those shadowy figures that look like inchoate images from cave paintings, we now have hard-edged figuration, expressive faces, sharply defined patterns.



"PITANG"

With a simple squinting of the eyes, pursing of lips or half-opening of the mouth, the artist manages to coax a lot of facial expressions from his subjects. He underscores these nuances of emotions with distinctive strokes and coloration, then underlines everything with patterns that swirl, slash, cross or puncture.

We see this in pieces such as "Viktor Trumpeta," "Untitled," "Pitang." If you're distracted enough by the patterns, you'd miss seeing the details that reveal Viktor is smoking a cigarette or Pitang has dirty hands.

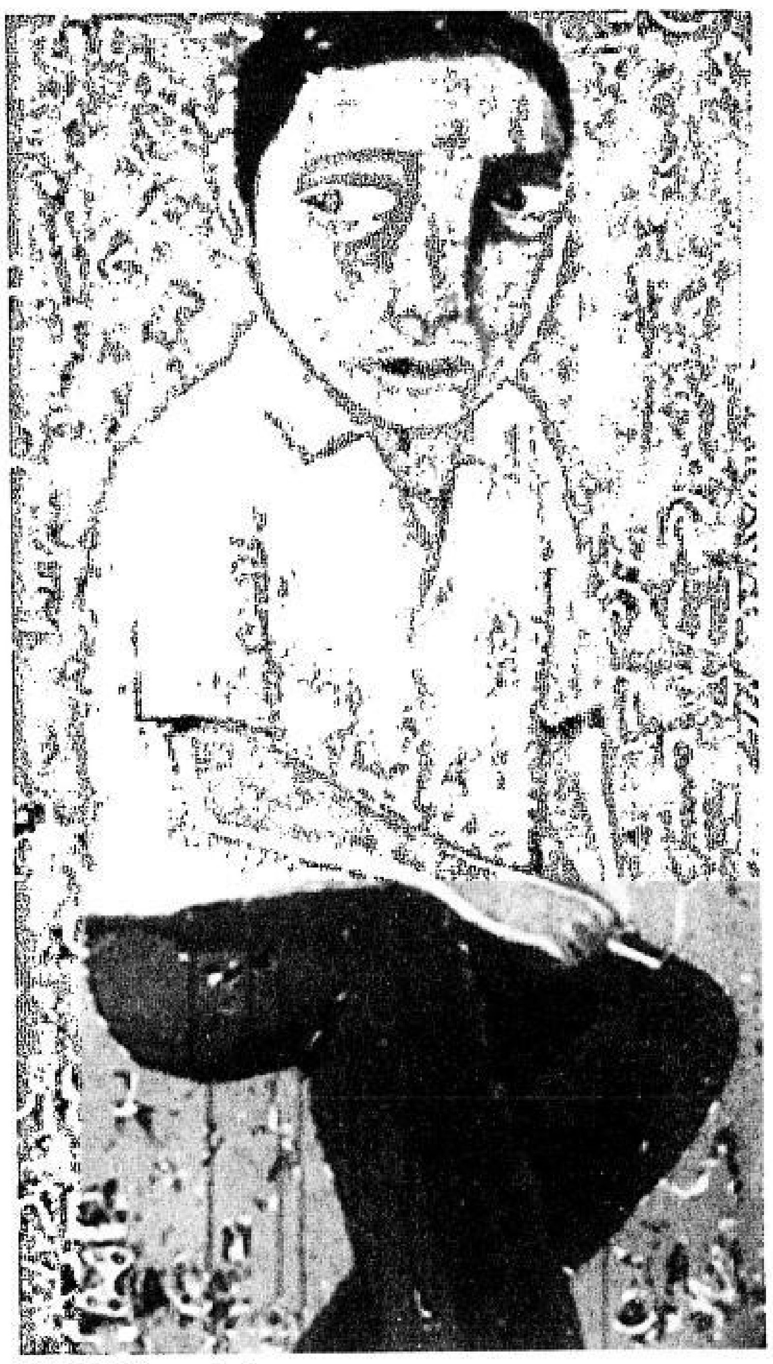
The artist has even imbued some of these portraits with mystery. What has the woman in the piece called "Untitled" on her head? Is she a peddler of *kakanin*, or a fish vendor? And is Anton a cross-dresser? (Now, that's over-interpretation—but it does enrich the art, doesn't it?)

The exhibit note elaborates on the concept of the whole exhibit: "Here the artist not only explores the spontaneous and reflective characteristics of drawing but also offers a fresh way of depicting characters and the roles they are playing. Figure-and-ground relationship is shown in the play of paper and mediums while mapping and finding meanings in a consortium of interrelated images."

That sounds too academic for these simple images. But for his youth (he's in his mid-20s), we allow the artist such indulgence.

Beyond any interpretation, however, these look like mature pieces—no longer studies but finished products.

Tapaya, a Fine Arts graduate from University of the Philippines, who took up further art studies in Helsinki and New York, is one of our least hyped artists who should matter more. He has depth of ideas, and the technical skill and visual flair to commit those to canvas.



"VIKTOR Trumpeta"

Cesare A.X. Syjuco and the New Formalism

By Angelo V. Suárez
Contributor

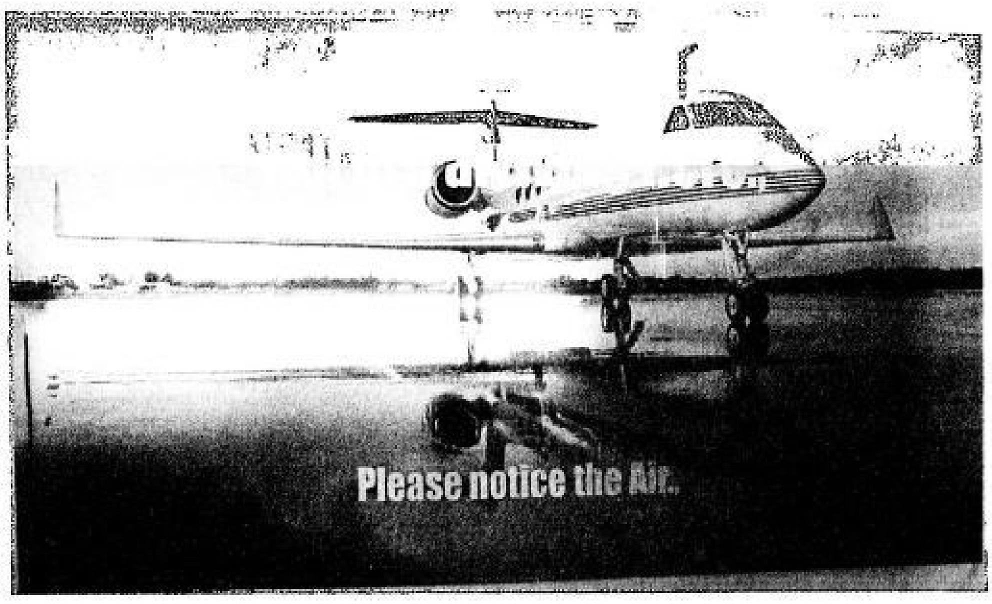
WITH THE STENCH OF THE GREAT New Critical corpse still hanging in the literary air, it has become almost an insult to brand anyone a formalist these days, what with the old formalism's emphasis on the so-called closed nature of the literary "work" (in opposition to Roland Barthes' open literary "texts") and debilitating delusions of organic unity—poetry's arrogance of apparent completeness unto itself, denying any contextual relations to cultural and historical materiality.

But with the fresh air provided by "Mighty Big Headstand," the first of a series of small-scale exhibits cum large installations of "visual and literary hybrids," Cesare A.X. Syjuco doesn't seem to give a damn what he's branded anymore.

And maturely so, for to extend his metaphor it isn't merely the brave artist's head at risk here: The verbo-visual headstand straddling different traditions at once is done also by the body-language of its viewers/readers, unwitting participants who themselves become personae in these 3D poetic texts, quite literally exploring a book bound by walls rather than paper or carton, themselves read as part of the show by more and more passersby.

Textuality, texturality

By the gallery's entrance, one is greeted by the declaration "You have resurrected here," as if by coming to the show s/he has entered a new life, a new textual beginning—followed by the instructions "Please excuse the inconvenience/ Please don't struggle/ Please do exactly as you're told," forewarning the audience of more instructions and consequent participation, urging them into performance, penetrating the cold defenses of and disturbing armchair readership accustomed to being spoon-fed with bland and passive insight.

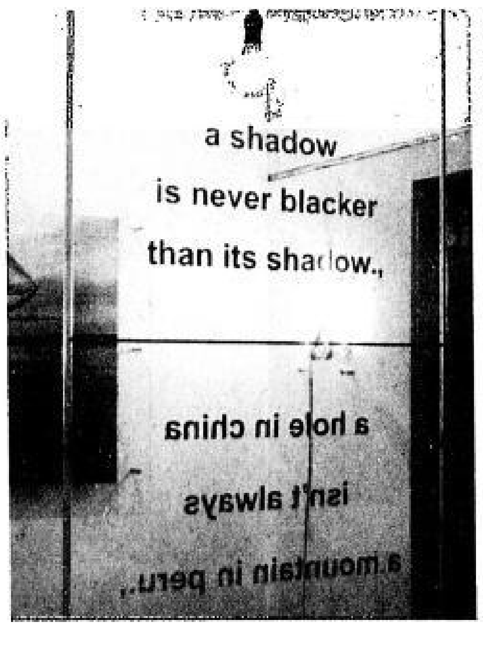


Please notice the Air.

And certainly there is no passivity here. The show, after all, entails engagement, for to read Syjuco's texts is to also view them, juxtaposing the abstraction of discursive language against the concrete experience of the image—a showcase of the creative potency of typeface when taken for more than mere tasteful design: typography at the service of signification, the medium becoming McLuhan's message.

The use of transparent glass not only allows both sides of the page to be read and viewed at once, but allows the other pages—the walls behind the glass—easeful visibility from any single standpoint: Imagine being able to read page 14 of a standard book while you're still on page 8.

One may also view one text then proceed to another, without any given order save for those formulated by chance or by the viewer.



A form of reading, a reading of form

Tension between the verbal and the visual, the two-way penetrability of glass, death and shadows and resurrection—the motif of duality and reflection is made most palpable by twin wide and lighted panes depicting planes occupying two walls at a 90-degree angle within the gallery.

Each airplane is faced with its doppelganger, both parked over their own reflections, printed in what seem to be Benday dots like those famously employed exaggeratedly in Lichtenstein's popular comix-style art.

But these dots aren't so much culled from old comix as the cover boxes of more recent hobby toys, of plastic tanks and model planes waiting to be assembled by the enthusiastic hobbyist.

But the implications go beyond the banal surfaces of hobby. Above the left plane, the text goes, "You are leaving here," and below, "Please notice the Air." Above the right plane the text goes in counterpoint, "You are arriving here," and below, "Please notice the Air."

What is most interesting here isn't the juxtaposition of arrival and departure as mirror images of each other (made literal by the actual surface reflections of each other as effected by glass and light), but the two planes' juxtaposition against a third wall, on which hangs a glass pane depicting the image of the Madonna and Child.

Where the classical meets the contemporary, the pane which is the Holy Infant's makeshift 2D stable becomes the olden reflection of the plane's pane, which in turn is its makeshift 2D hangar.

And while one plane is the other's doppelganger just as arrival is departure's mirror image, could this possibly be making the implication that the Son is the Mother's reverse double, consequently connoting the secularization of the once-divine and the sacred quality huge manufactured objects (especially military objects) like planes have come to acquire?

The discourse jumpstarted by Syjuco is not simplistic but materially nuanced, denying any easy one-to-one correspondence among reflections: A shadow isn't merely as dark as its shadow, after all, and holes don't automatically translate into mountains.

And yet even in isolation, the third pane is already in itself a complex marvel: Backed by light whose five long bulbs seem like a hand giving both icon and audience the finger, the image's classical roots in painting is complicated by its postmodern reproduction as a printout.

The pinkish luminescence of the middle finger almost begs the viewer to pay attention to detail, to stoop in close examination of the imperfect inkjet quality of printing. length

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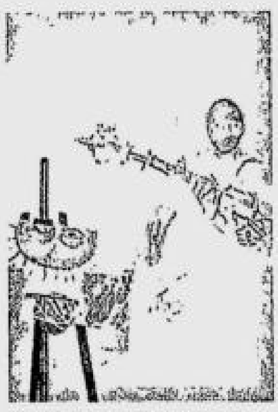
VISUAL ARTS

Malang cartoons at Philamlife

Mauro Malang Santos's two decades of work as newspaper illustrator and cartoonist for the Evening Chronicle's This Week magazine from the late '40's up to the '60's are recorded in the exhibit, "The Forgotten Malang: A Career in Cartoons." Conceptualized by Project Art, with Globe Telecom and Philamlife as co-presenters and Ayala Foundtion as sponsore, the exhibit opens on Feb. 23, 6 p.m., at the lobby of the Philamlife Bldg. in Ermita, Manila. It runs until March 30.

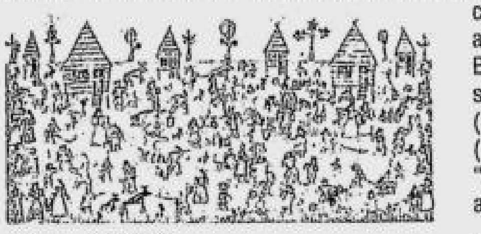
Art groups' forum

The Metropolitan Museum of Manila and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts invite all visual art groups, artists, art students and art enthusiasts to join the forum, "Tipanan sa Tipon," Feb. 23, from 2:30-6 p.m. at the MET Upper Galleries. It features the six participating groups of the ongoing Tipon: Artists Organizing as group panelists: Ang Ilustrador ng Kabataan, Anting-Anting, Davao Artists' Foundation, Luna Art Collective, Pampanga Arts Guild and Produksyon Tramontina, Inc. The art exhibits are curated by Cris Rolle, Brenda Fajardo and Bobi Valenzuela. Call 5237855, 5361566 or email info@metmuseum.ph. Admission is free, but pre-registration is required.


"ANTING-ANTING"

Barquilla in Bliss Café, Baguio

As part of the flower festival celebration in Baguio City, Bliss Café presents the works of Amador Barquilla. "Ahimsa" features 16 works by Barquilla, a talented artist who was featured in Mabuhay Magazine selections of artist in its December 2006 Christmas special issue. Barquilla was inspired by fellow artist and cousin Jerry Morada. His currrent series, "Karerang Sako," 24 x 16 oil on canvas, and "Pahiyas Festival," 24 x 16 oil on canvas, can form a triptych. Bliss Café is at Munsayac Inn, Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City. In Manila, Barquilla is presented at Galerie Joaquin San Juan. Call (02)723-9253 / 723-9418 in Manila and (074)442-2451 / 0917-8464729. "Ahimsa" opens on Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m., and runs until April 6.


"BARANGAY"

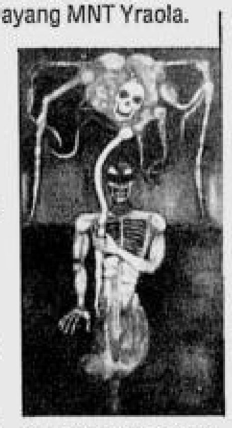
Gregorio at the CCP

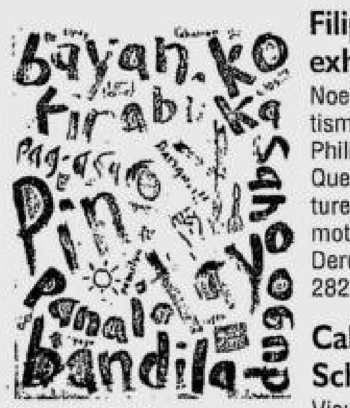
Raphael D. L. Gregorio opens his solo exhibit "Pendulum of Time" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Pasilyo Vicente Manansala (2/F Hallway) on March 1 and will run until April 15. The pendulum is a metaphor for the struggle between good and evil, because it swings between two extreme points. Gregorio presents the cross as pendulum, using cross-shaped paintings that symbolize the choices we have to make in building families that in turn build a moral society. The exhibit is curated by Dayang MNT Yraola. Gallery hours are from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily except Mondays and holidays. Call 8323702.

D' Bayan at The Crucible

Igan D' Bayan presents his latest paintings in his second one-man exhibit dubbed "Long Live the New Flesh," which opens tomorrow (Feb. 20), 6 p.m. at The Crucible Gallery, 4/F, SM Megamall A., Mandaluyong City.

It is "Rembrandt-meets-Resident Evil" in D' Bayan's latest exhibit, which features paintings of masters of war, sexual predators, assorted mutants, as well as characters from children's books and cartoons, which are depicted as mutated wreckage of memory. Call 6356061 for details.


"GIMME Shelter"



"BAYAN Ko"

Filipino artist in Hong Kong exhibit

Noel de Guzman presents an exhibit that depicts patriotism and nationalism, "Bayan Ko," Feb. 22-April 19 at the Philippine Consulate General, 14/F United Center, 95 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong. De Guzman will feature 18 works focusing on scribbles and calligraphy promoting unity and love of country. For inquiries, call Eric Derupe at (852) 28238536 or Marie Docas at (852) 28238513.

Cabigting, Garcellano at Hope Christian School

Visual artists Annie Cabigting and Lyra Abueg Garcellano will showcase their works in a teacher-student show dubbed "ARTiculate," Feb. 20-27 at the Art Room of Hope Christian High School, 1242 Benavidez St., Sta. Cruz, Manila. The show is free and open to the general public. Call 2548339 for details.

Lecture

Kabbalah instructor David Ghiyam will be in Manila to give a lecture on "The Secret Codes of the Universe" Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m. at the AIM Conference Center, Benavidez St., Legaspi Village, Makati. Seminar fee is P1000 per person. Call 0915-5465667 or log on to www.kabbalah.com/philippines.

Art as 'Zenlightenment'

Rico Lascano's abstracts to be exhibited in New York

By Cid Reyes
Contributor

TO HAVE VISUALIZED THE ALMOST impossible, because retinally ungraspable, subject of Satori would have led Rico Lascano to merely frame a space: The gesture itself would have been the singular decision to give up the enterprise.

The painting would have been conceived or composed, in the words of American minimalist artist Ad Reinhardt, of "no lines or imaginings, no shapes or composing or representings, no visions or sensations or impulses, no visions or signs or impastos, no decoratings or colorings or picturings, no pleasures or pains, no accidents or readymades, no things, no ideas, no relations, no attributes, no qualities—nothing that is not of the essence."

The journey, in short, is toward the perfect void.

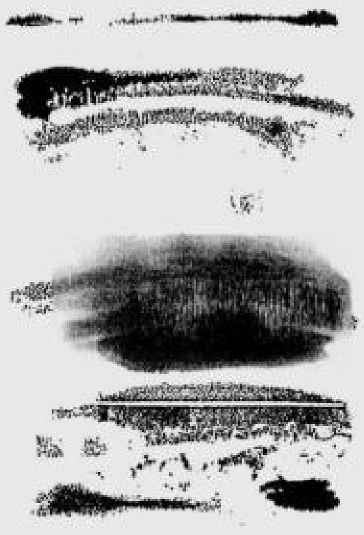
For Satori is the spiritual goal of Zen Buddhism. The word is described as "individual Enlightenment," with the capitalized E that is a signifier for its ineffable state. It is the enlightenment of the Buddha. Satori is a "flash of recognition."

The way to Satori is paved by way of meditation—of freeing the mind and entering the world of "suchness." A traditional way is through the contemplation of Koans or riddles—the most famous, of course, is: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

Rico Lascano's "Satori" series may be regarded then as visual exercises to quiet the mind and the spirit. Projected as levels ascending to a pure state of contemplation, these paintings, while not images of emptiness, prepare the eyes—windows of the soul—for entrance into another sphere, the state of absolute awareness.

They are rich with the panoply of artmaking, all intended to solicit the images of transcendent peace and solitude: a gentle mistiness as of rain clouds, rippling water in a secluded pond, aerial visions of distant mountaintops.

Employing the wet-on-wet technique, Lascano preserves the freshness of muted pigments, hushed by commanding washes of grays and monochromes.

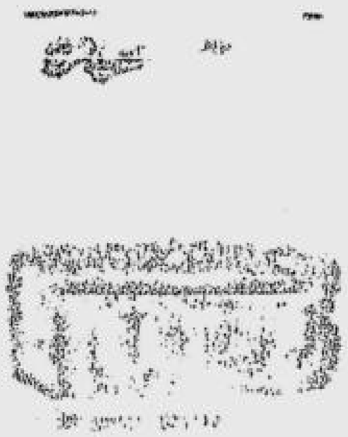

"SATORI: (Meditation II)"

Pictorial equivalents

Indeed, they are pictorial equivalents of Zen gardens, which with their sand, white gravel and rocks transform an enclosed space into an ocean of stillness.

The most well-known Zen garden is at the Ryo-anji temple in northwest Kyoto, Japan. In this secluded garden, 15 rocks are so arranged in a sea of raked pebbles that only 14 are visible from any vantage point. It is said that only upon attaining Satori, induced by deep continuous contemplation, will the last invisible rock hover into view.

In Lascano's pictorial Zen landscapes, the thin horizontal zones of inky wash are studiously arranged but seem to have been rendered as though the artist were in a trance. The paintings evoke a sensation that illuminates a visual experience of interior luminosity.


"SATORI: (Meditation IV)"

A Filipino artist who has been quietly but steadfastly shoring up a well-deserved recognition, Lascano has always been drawn to Oriental themes. Previous bodies of works, such as the "Pondering" and the "Streams of Consciousness" series, are all subdued chromatic works, alluding to the stillness of water, intuiting silence by the merest whispers of brushstrokes.

When seen against the brutishness of so much agitated, gestural abstractions, Lascano's works are an oasis of the spirit, a relief from the hectic execution of pigment and violation of space.

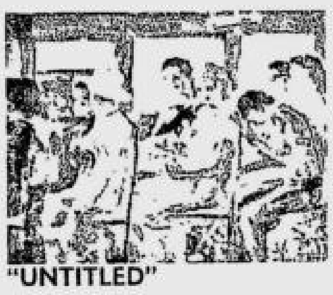
"SATORI: (Meditation V)"

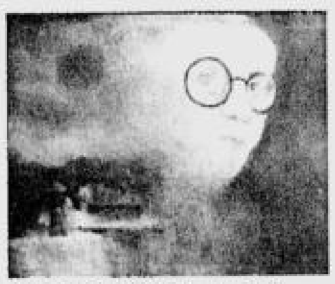
His latest works, the "Satori" series, continue to forge a way toward an inevitable lucidity. In this may be found the burgeoning strength of the artist. Divested of friction and rage, Lascano's art is his own voyage toward personal enlightenment.

Lascano's "Satori Series" was exhibited recently at Galerie Astra, 2/F LRI Business Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia St. (Reposo), Bel-Air II, Makati.

The series will be exhibited in New York, Feb. 26-March 6, at the Philippine Center in Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

Retrospective on Florencio B. Concepcion, abstractionist


"UNTITLED"

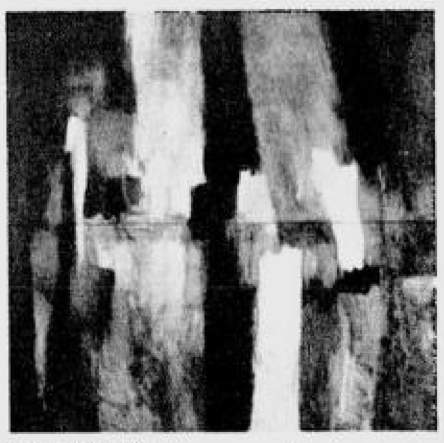

"DOUBLE Self-Portrait"

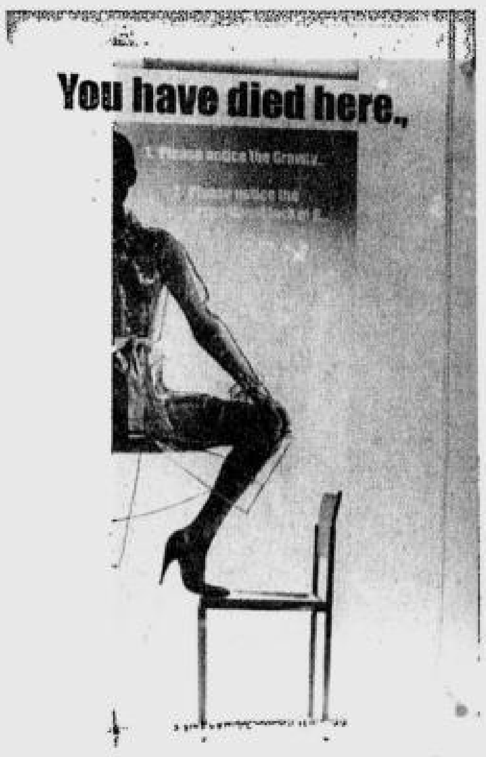
"FIGURING INTO ABSTRACTION," A RETROspective exhibition on Florencio B. Concepcion, will open on Feb. 20 at the UP Jorge B. Vargas Museum. The exhibit highlights Concepcion's artistic development from his schooling days at the UP School of Fine Arts, to his scholarship in Italy for graduate studies in the Fine Art Academy in Rome, and his professional practice as an artist and teacher. Concepcion was one of the proponents of abstract painting in the Philippines. He is also recognized for his contribution as an art educator, having served as director and, later dean, of the University of the East College of Fine Arts.

While known for his abstract works, Concepcion believed in the value of learning the basic skills and techniques in drawing and painting.

The exhibition showcases his works in various media—drawings, paintings, prints, and sculptures.

The exhibit is curated by Victoria Herrera of the Department of Art Studies, UP College of Arts and Letters, and Albert Avellana of the Avellana Art Gallery. Call 928 1927, email vargasmuseum@gmail.com, or visit www.vargasmuseum.org.


"ALLEGRO"



wise jags all over. This prompts the audience to reexamine the other imagistic texts, their occasionally unsmooth placement of acetate sheets over glass, emphasizing the seams over what seems plain and natural.

For, like in his use of Benday dots in the planes, it is this confession of artificiality that constitutes Syjuco's formalism, that all artistic products are merely products of their process: Disillusioned by organic unity, one ceases to view any form as natural but rather as arbitrary constructs, shaped by the artist and further shaped by his audience.

Far beyond mere utilization and manipulation of form, "Mighty Big Headstand" is a mighty big critique of form—and Syjuco accomplishes this like a true master, at once, playful and with effortless grace.

The show is ongoing at Mag:net Gallery, Paseo Center, G/F, Paseo de Roxas, Makati.

School offers digital album workshops, courses

THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER and you probably have tons of photographs or folders of unsorted .jpeg files from your digital camera.

There is a more hi-tech, efficient and creative way to store and present your memorable photos and videos. You can even edit out the embarrassing portions without your audience suspecting anything. This is called creating a Digital Album.

First Academy of Computer Arts (on the second floor of Saville Building along Gil Puyat Avenue and Paseo de Roxas, Makati) offers Digital Album Workshop where students can learn how to incorporate photos, videos, narration, graphics and music into a seamless multimedia presentation.

Students get a first hand understanding of the basics of good storytelling and creative thinking, storyboarding and design. The course has a total duration of 28 hours and is perfect for beginners and hobbyists of all ages and profession. They can learn using computer software readily available in their own home PC.

Although the Digital Album Workshop is a complete experience in itself, it is also the first module in the Amateur Digital Filmmaking Course at First Academy. A student can take the second module on Digital Storytelling where he can get a more in-depth understanding of how to take good photographs and videos and how to manipulate them to create the desired look or image. Digital Storytelling also delves into digital compositing using Adobe Photoshop and After Effects.

The final module, Filmmaking Fundamentals takes the student through the rudiments of creating a digital film from directing, writing the screenplay, planning and non-linear editing via Adobe Premiere.

"Digital storytelling is the newest form of creative presentation," says Margot de los Santos, First Academy's training manager. People are naturally creative and given the right tools, they can express themselves better. Besides, contrary to what people think, digital storytelling is easy to learn and apply."

First Academy of Computer Arts also offers courses on 3D animation, digital arts, web design and more. Classes are held weekdays and weekends with morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

Call 8982724 to 26 or visit www.firstacademy.net.

The Frenchman cometh

From page E1

"Before, you could cross borders easily with no problem," explains Eteve.

In his 30s, he continued his art in a boarding house on Vito Cruz while teaching French at Sta. Teresa and Assumption College.

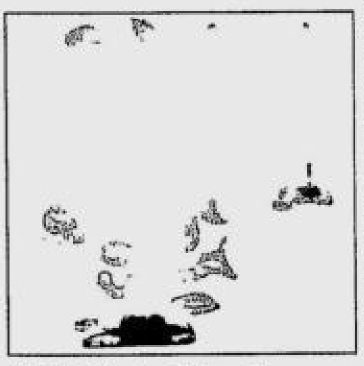
Cosmovistique art

Eteve, like most artists two decades ago, eventually found himself in the hub of the artistic—and literary—revolution, the Los Indios Bravos café and restaurant on A. Mabini, where the likes of Pete Lacaba and Ben Cabrera gathered. It was, however, ordered closed during martial law.

And it was in those times that Eteve coined the term "Cosmovistique art" to describe his style.

"In French, it means 'life in the cosmos,' Eteve says. "Life in the cosmos can be anything. We are part of it."

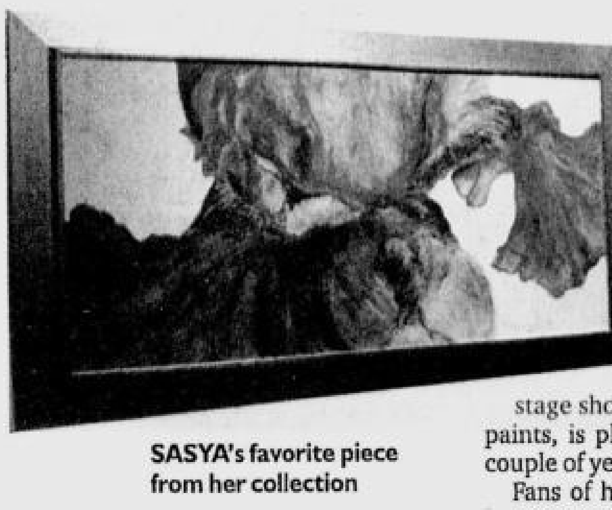
He continues: "The reason for this is not just the pictures and symbols of the subconscious, but mainly, its flow, which I liken to a river. It can start from one end of a street wall and be drawn non-stop without erasures or additions, like a river flowing among the rocks. Outside of that, versatility is a great ingredient, meaning, art can be applied to anything. This art has no relation to individuals, but has a complete relation to civilization, which, for me, is the cosmic element of being."


"A PEEP in the Galaxy"

E-mail author at dxmatilla@yahoo.com.

From Indonesia with love

From page E1


SASYA's favorite piece from her collection

a different way. Even using watercolor on canvas is considered unusual," Sasya says.

At the opening of her show last Tuesday, people flocked to see her paintings and a huge number of them were sold on the first night.

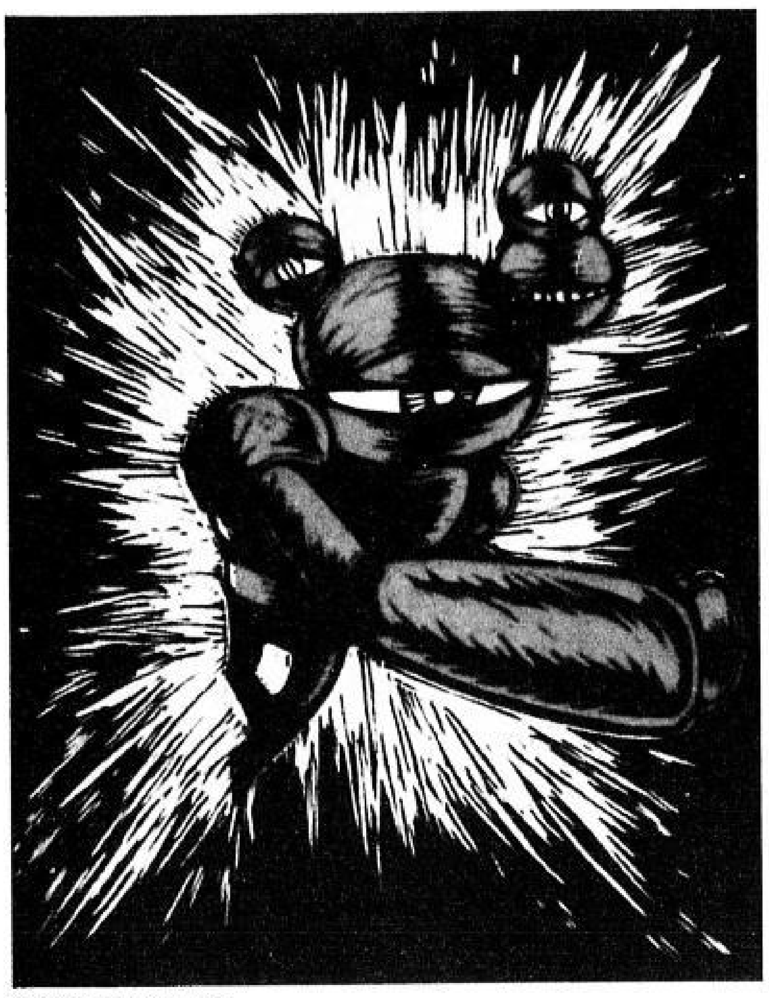
"This year has been crazy," she says, coming as she did from a solo exhibition in Jakarta. Her next stop is Perth, where she will also exhibit.

Sasya, who is also known to stage shows with her 12-year-old son who also paints, is planning to return to the country in a couple of years with another collection.

Fans of her art are already looking forward to her return, to be touched once again by her magic realism and the femininity of her brushstrokes.

Go! Go! Mariano!

These are rubbercut prints that remind one of childhood



"GO! GO! Roboto"

By **Martin Masadao**
Contributor

RUBBER SOUL" IS PRINTMAKER/painter Mariano Ching's exhibit of prints at 1/of Gallery in Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, showcasing 11 rubbercut prints done by the artist over a period of four years.

At first glance, one is reminded of the sci-fi movie posters of Hollywood films in the '50s and '60s—pure fantasy, but replete with the innocent wonder of a pre-teen sci-fi aficionado of the period. The images look terrifying, with the prerequisite blank, wide-eyed expressions of the aliens; but one is reassured that in the end the human race will prevail against all odds.

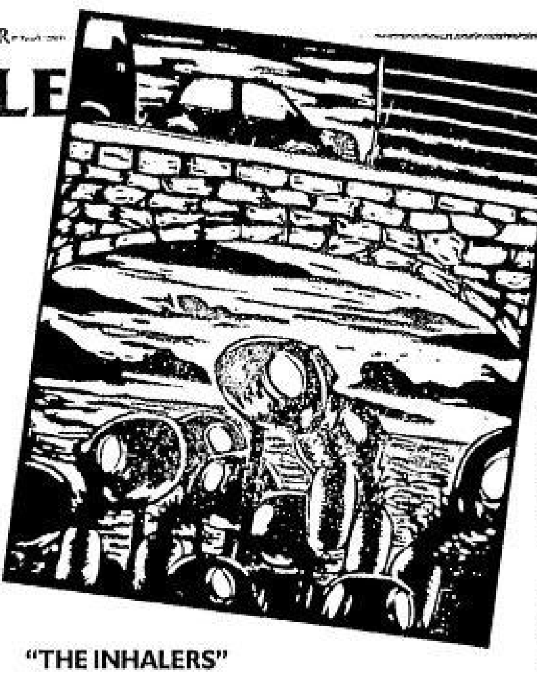
The print titled "Go! Go! Roboto!" evokes all the power and zeal of a Mighty Mouse-like alien. Rendered in red, the character in superhero stance is ready to defend the universe against all evil elements.

"House," on the other hand, is a take on space and its loneliness, emptiness and vastness. We see a dog in a space capsule drifting endlessly.

In another print, we see a green alien of shaman-like characteristics bestowing some magical spell on a small, young boy. Could the boy be the next master of the universe?

Thus, "A Boy Named Guerra" again tells us the old saga of good vs evil. In this collection of prints, good definitely triumphs!

Ching has long been fascinated with the "printing" process. Coupled with this is his fondness for *komiks* and his preoccupation with sci-fi images. The theme may be juvenile (I would rather say "child-like"), but the result is a textured, composed, stark piece of art.



"THE INHALERS"

Ching says he likes rubbercut printmaking maybe because of its practicality and his love for comics; he likes the bold colors and strong line. Rubbercut prints can be made at home, no need for a printing press.

Asked if he purposely chose the colors of the Philippine flag, he replies: "*Yun lang kasi* available *na kulay*."

For the layman, yes, in printmaking artists use the same ink as that used by printing presses. So, no room here for subdued, earth colors or Martha Stewart's palette. You get Globe blue, McDo yellow and Jollibee red.

Ching is a product of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts. He had further studies at Kyoto University in Japan. He has exhibited here and abroad and considers himself a full-time printmaker and painter.

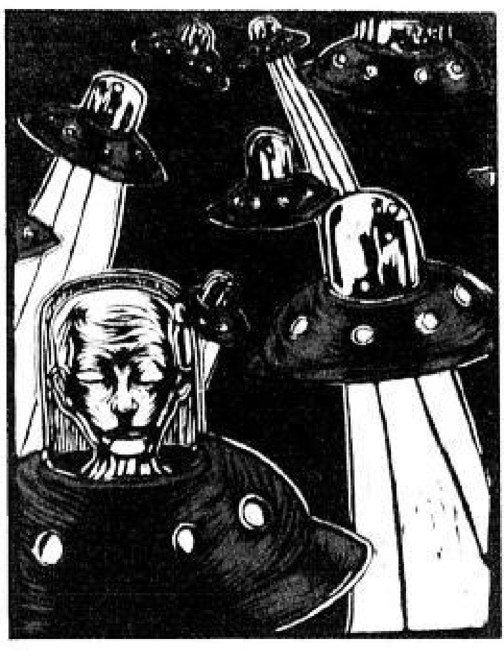
He shrugs off the common notion that printmaking is less of an art as compared to painting, but insists that maybe people have not just come to appreciate the artform.

"*Marami ang nagsasabing* inferior *ang* printmaking *sa* painting. *Gusto nila* original painting *pa rin, pero* handmade *din naman ang* prints *eh*." (A lot of people are saying that printmaking is inferior to painting. They still like an original painting, but prints are also handmade.)

It is a pleasure that once in a while we come across works that transport us to a different time and place, comforting us through that journey with images we know all too well, reminding us of the past when life was simpler, when school shootings, kidnappings and terrorism were unheard of. When we greedily read and took in sci-fi and the possibility of alien invasions, and when we were spooked by one-eyed aliens, evil machines, organ-transplanting space creatures.

But then again, there is "Starman," the only piece with the only human being in it. It's reminiscent of the pop/rock posters of the '60s and '70s. I can almost hear my sister cry: "It's David Cassidy!"

"Rubber Soul" is a collaboration between 1/of Gallery and UFO Gallery. Call 9013152.



"UNTITLED"

Mario Parial's thankful art

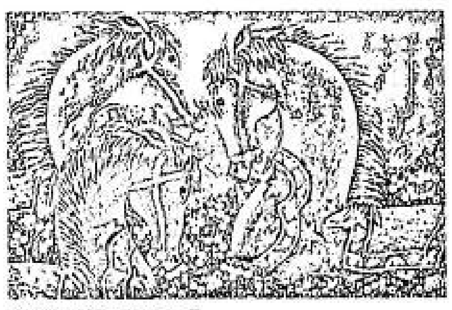
By **Lito B. Zulueta**

DESPITE THE SEEMINGLY RANDOM spirit of his paintings, their playful zest, there's nothing fortuitous about "Fortuitous Blessings," Mario Parial's newest show of 25 works in acrylic on canvas and on paper at Galerie Raphael of Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

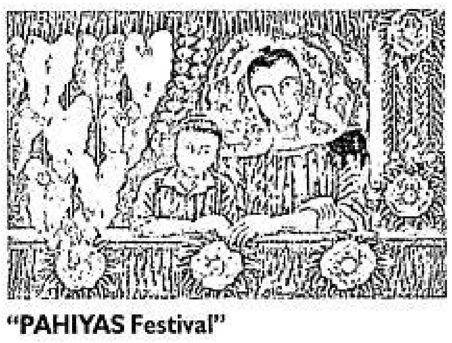
The works, generically described as along the naïf style, are not the products of naivete. As a former art professor at the University of Santo Tomas and University of the Philippines, Parial is anything but unsophisticated and unlettered.

He tackles celebratory images in a non-cerebral fashion, but the intelligence is unmistakable. His is an art concealed.

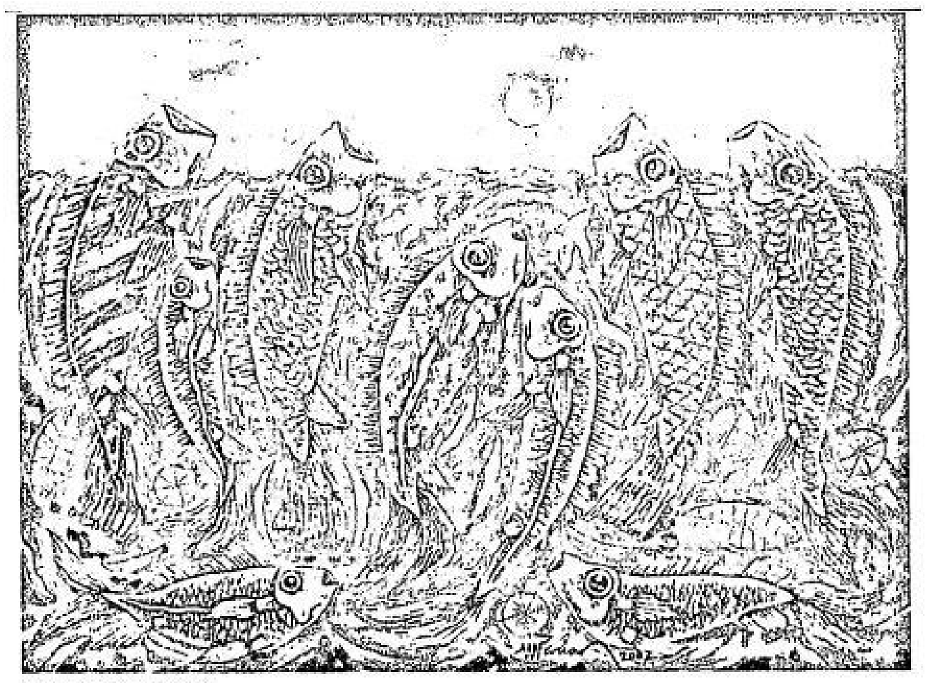
The concealment is done in a riot of colors and a composition that seems to have been premised on the dignity of clutter. Parial has appropriated the spirit and images of folk painting, and his canvases have been distinguished by vivid, intense hues and claustrophobic design.



"THREE Horses"



"PAHIYAS Festival"



"BLESSINGS III"

His figures are often set in carnivals and fiestas, and they seem to breathe the smothering air of their settings, as if every inch of space and every ounce of oxygen have been taken over by the fervor of celebration.

Even his genre works, such as the Mother and Child figures, are cast in unrepentant folk colors and lines. Perhaps because of his unabashed folk inclination, the genre works assume a life of their own, revivified in a fresh, raw way.

His Marian works, in fact, have been included in two international books on the subjects, along with works by Michaelangelo, El Greco, Da Vinci and Raphael.

The folk attitude that is the soul and spirit of fiestas and carnivals, at least as far as the Philippine setting goes, is thanksgiving. And this attitude of gratitude permeates Parial's new exhibit.

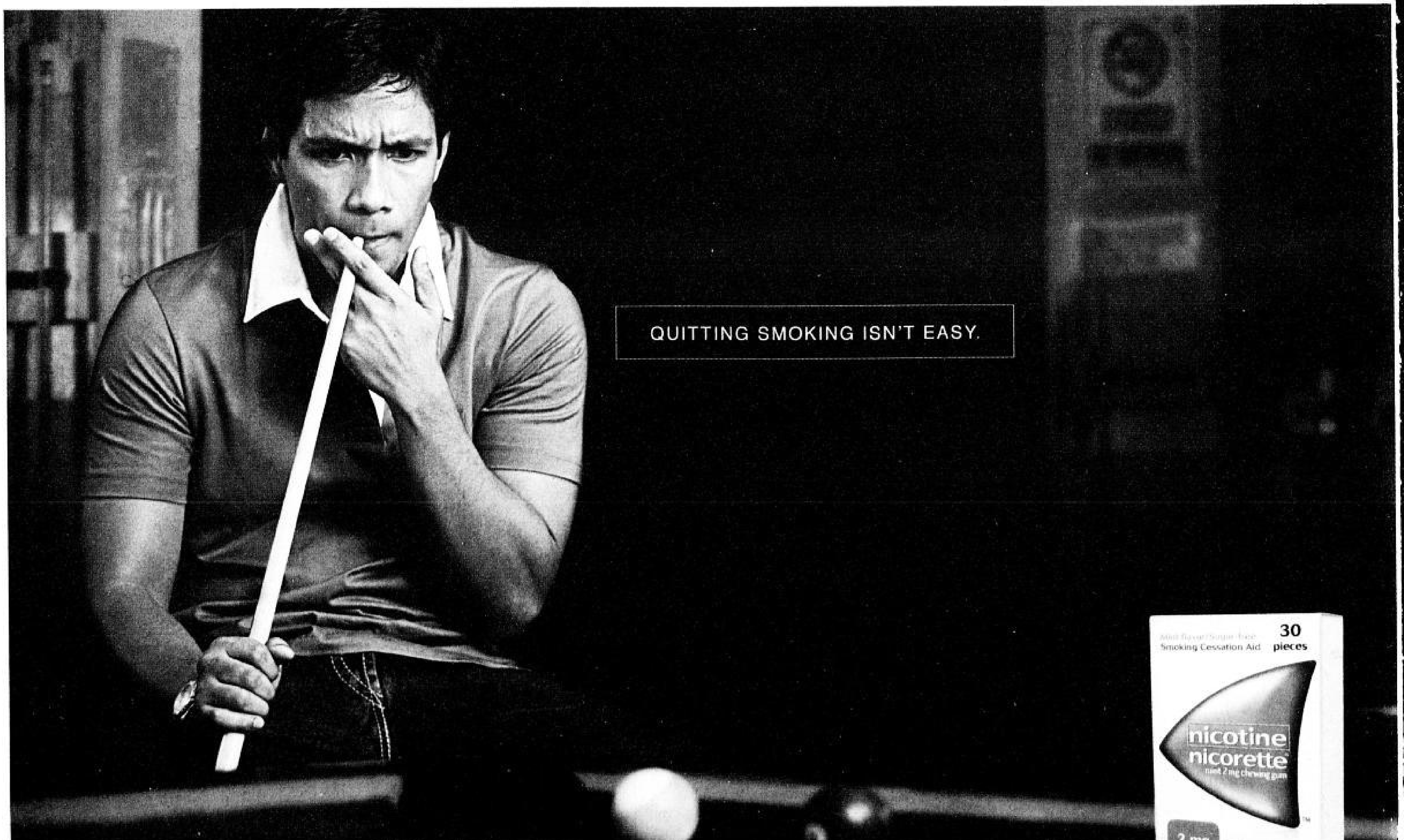
Of course, Parial has a lot to be thankful for. After retiring from the academe, he went full-time into painting and seems to have achieved a second wind at it.

Like Antonio Austria, an older contemporary at UST and also an art teacher for most of his life, Parial has achieved success in art with his bevy of admirers and collectors growing by the day.

Both are naïf artists who, ironically, came from the stiff academy. But there's an anti-academic air to their works, almost like a defiance and a dare.

The defiance is not devil-may-care or stupid. Parial is a master of his craft, and there's no empty countermanding in his art. He has largely stuck to his guns despite the rise and fall of the art market. He has remained true to his artistic calling and style despite the vagaries of artistic trends and clichés.

If he is reaping the blessings of a determined artistic stance, it's because he has conducted his artmaking with little "fortuitousness." His is confident art, but without the loud claims.



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Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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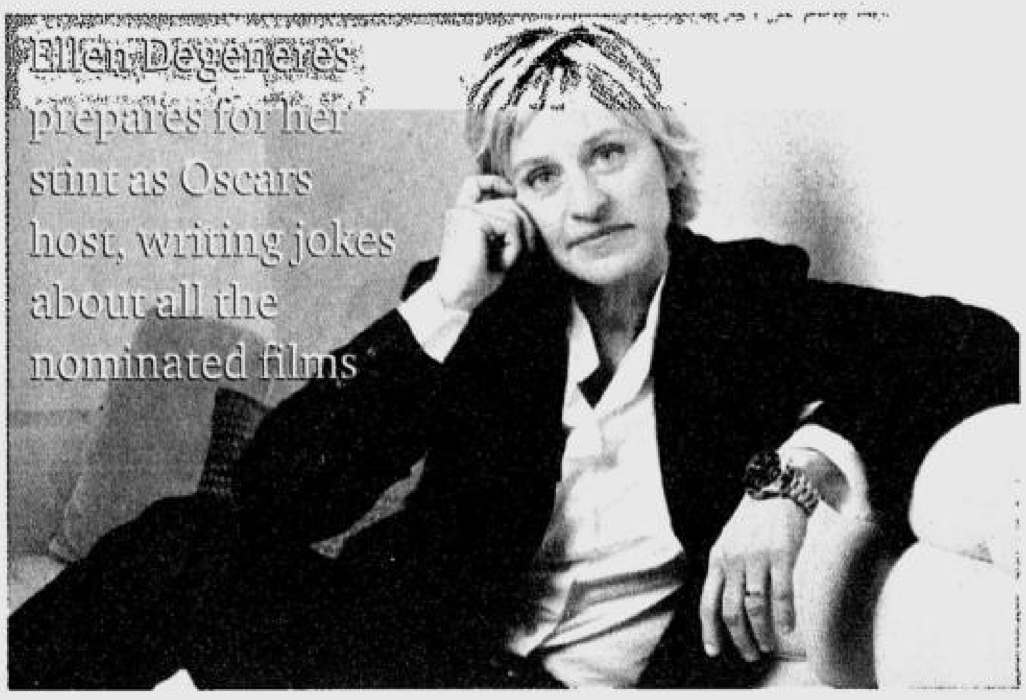


Ellen Degeneres prepares for her stint as Oscars host, writing jokes about all the nominated films

A dream close-up

BURBANK, CALIFORNIA—On Sunday (Monday in Manila), Ellen DeGeneres will make good on a six-year-dream.

She's had her eye on hosting the Oscars since her turn at the Emmy Awards in 2001.

"I thought, well this is fun ... I should do the biggest one of all," says the 49-year-old comedian, who's tinier and more intense than she appears on TV. "I've been hoping they would ask me for probably six years now."

She finally got the invitation a few months ago and has been working overtime ever since.

Crazy, nonstop

"The Ellen DeGeneres" weekday talk show consumes a full workweek. The gregarious host typically arrives at the studio at 11 a.m., writes the monologue, prepares with producers for the day's guests, hits hair and makeup, then tapes the show. By the time she heads home in her brand new, smoke gray Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, it's past dinner time.

Lately, DeGeneres has doubled-up on her talk-show, taping two episodes a day. That way she can focus on Oscar for a full week before the awards and still have fresh shows airing while she's absent.

It's a lot of work—"crazy, just nonstop," she says—but she's fueled by excitement. As a lifelong movie fan, she's "honored" to host Hollywood's biggest night. And as an entertainer, she's eager to take on one of the biggest challenges of her career.

"Some people rock-climb and some people skydive. I host the Oscars," says DeGeneres, sitting cross-legged on a slouchy brown sofa at her NBC office. "It's thrilling ... not too many people can do something like this."

Inspiration

She spends nights and weekends working with her Oscar writers, but ideas percolate at all hours. The show monologue came to her in the shower two months ago, she says.

"I wrote the entire thing," she says. "Of course, two weeks later, I threw it away."

DeGeneres is inspired by this year's nominees, she says, not by past Oscar shows.

She does not have any childhood memories of the Academy Awards, though they were an annual event in her Louisiana home.

Based on previous hosting duties at the Emmys and Grammys, DeGeneres says she "kind of knows what to expect." But stepping onto Oscar's stage offers its own high-profile challenges.

She says Chris Rock, who hosted the show in 2005, told her last week that the job is "scary as hell." But DeGeneres has a different perspective: "I can't wait to look out and see all those famous faces."

She will not try to emulate any past Oscar host, she says, though she does have her favorites. "I always go back to Johnny Carson. He was just a classy guy and ... you [always] felt like you were in good hands." She is hoping that her positive attitude will spread a happy vibe through the Kodak Theatre.

Hysterical

That warm approach is what makes her a perfect host, says Laura Ziskin, producer of the 79th Academy Awards.

"She's just born to do this," Ziskin says. "She's hysterically funny, she's unpredictable and she makes you feel good. She's going to own it and blow us away."

DeGeneres has seen all the nominated films and counts "Babel" and "Notes on a Scandal" among her favorites. She is writing jokes around those, but she still hopes for some last-minute surprises on Oscar night—like when Jack Palance did his one-armed push-ups, or the year a streaker crossed the stage, flashing a peace sign, among other things.

"I'm going to make something horrible happen," she says with a glint in her light blue eyes. "Not like in a bad thing for anybody but I think something should happen." *AP*

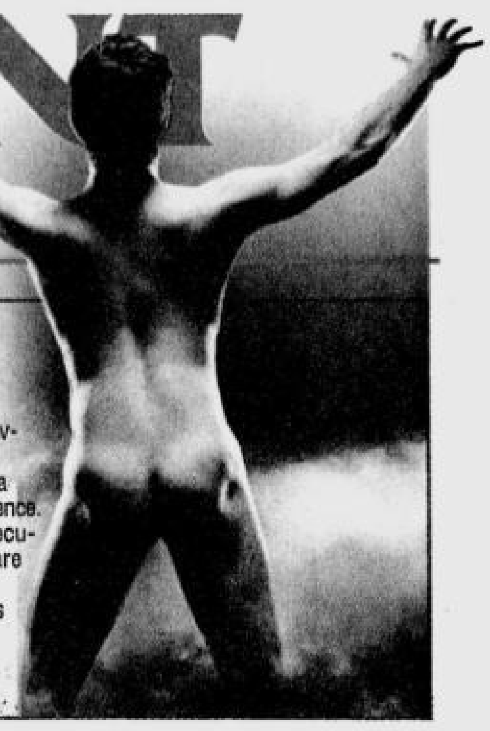
Trick or treat?

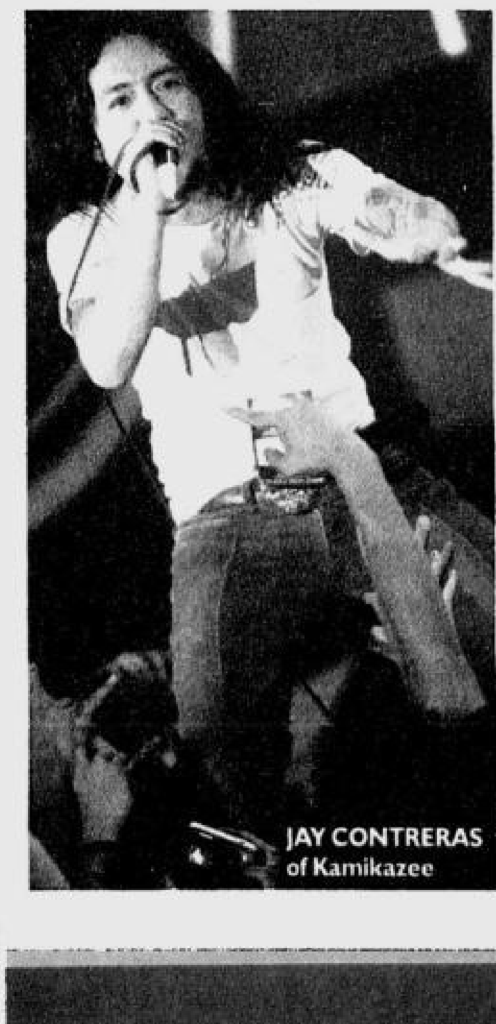
DANIEL "HARRY POTTER" RADCLIFFE BARES ALL IN THE WEST-END REVIVAL OF Peter Schaffer's play "Equus," opening Feb. 27 at the Gielgud Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, London.

Radcliffe, 17, spends 10 minutes on stage stark naked playing stable hand Alan Strang, a psychiatric patient who blinds six horses with a metal spike after a disturbing sexual experience.

The young actor's full-frontal sex act is feared to cause damage to his career. Executives of Warner Bros, the studio behind the film versions of J. K. Rowling's books, are disappointed.

"We've have been building up ... publicity for Harry's first—chaste—screen kiss in the next Potter film ("Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix") coming out this summer," a Warner exec was quoted to have said. "We've been blown completely out of the water by this."





JAY CONTRERAS of Kamikazee

Kamikazee leads 2nd MYX Awards nominees; 12 nods

ROCK GROUP KAMIKAZEE LEADS THE contenders for the 2007 MYX Music Awards with 12 nods, including double nominations in the major categories Favorite Song and Favorite Video.

The band is trailed by Sponge Cola and Sandwich, which got six nominations each.

In other categories, new performers like Christian Bautista, Erik Santos, Hale, Nina, Sarah Geronimo and 6cyclemind are competiting against veteran performers including Gary V, Francis M, Michael V, Parokya Ni Edgar, Rivermaya and Regine Velasquez.

Show biz personalities Gretchen Barretto, Chin Chin Gutierrez, Piolo Pascual, Rica Peralejo and Edu Manzano are also in the running for Favorite Guest Appearance in a Musical Video.

The winners will be chosen by via SMS. Tune in to MYX on Skycable Silver and Gold Channel 23 for details and updates.

Texters may vote once per category per day until March 10.

The awards ceremonies will be held at the AFP Theater on March 15.

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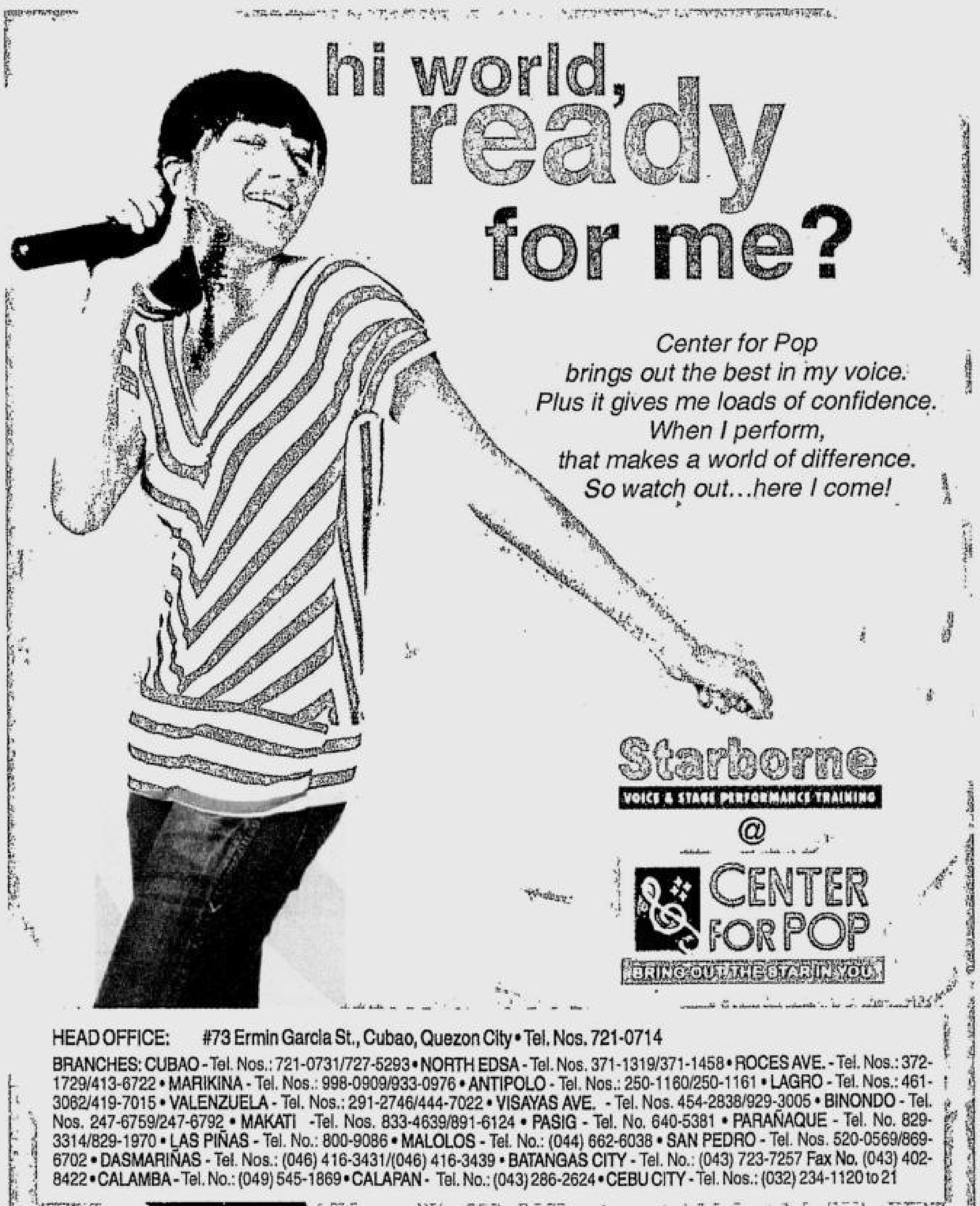

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'70s headliner gladly gives up the spotlight

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Jess Yuson
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUSANA PICHAY

Susana Pichay is happy teaching young & promising singing artists

YESTERDAY

SCRIBBLED ON THE WHITE board in Susana Pichay's office are her daily appointments: hourly sessions with voice students. Her days begin at 9 a.m. and end at 7 p.m.

"Sometimes I work until 10 p.m.," she says. "It's no hassle, since my home is near the studio."

She insists that teaching a new generation of singers is not work for her; it's her joy.

Watching her students onstage gives her the ultimate high, Susana says. And when they become professional ... "That's the best compliment," she says. "[And] the best reward is to see them make it to the top."

THE DIVA, circa 1994

THE TEACHER, today

Graduates

Among her graduates are Jaya, Francine Prieto, Maui Taylor, "Starstruck" winner Jennylyn Mercado, "Pop Star Kids" finalist Renzo Almario and Talent Olympics champ Kim Flores.

She describes her job: "I [direct] my students' overall development as singers. Apart from voice training, I also take care of their wardrobe and grooming."

She instructs them what to eat. "Chocolates, mangoes, anything sweet" are a no-no. "They should also avoid chicken skin and other fatty foods. They should watch their weight and take care of their complexion."

When they're onstage, the teacher sees to it "that their onstage movements are not too stiff or look too choreographed."

Prospective students go through the wringer.

"An audition process allows me to determine what type of singers they are—pop, rock, R&B or classical," she explains. Once the student's style is pegged, the teacher gets down to the brass tacks.

Even hip-hop

"I ask students not to sing songs that they already know. I'd rather that they learned new, unfamiliar tunes. I ask them to buy a clear book where they can keep new music sheets."

The goal is to encourage every student to build his own repertoire.

"I've been teaching for over 20 years, but until now I am still studying new techniques and styles," Susana says. "My brother, who is based in the US, sends me the latest training tapes. I wanted to teach rap, so I studied hip-hop. I don't hold back. I share everything I know with my students—all the trade secrets!"

She confesses that she sometimes misses performing.

"I still get offers [for shows], but most of the time I am tied up with teaching." (She had a dinner show, entitled "One Night Only," at the Makuhari Restaurant in Malate on Feb. 17.)

A champ

If she is a passionate teacher, it's probably because Susana was an equally intense singer in the 1970s.

A champion on "Bagong Kampeon," a TV talent search hosted by Rod Navarro, she soon became a headliner in Manila's top nightspots, Eduardo's and Impiyerno.

She earned P200 to P300 a night, she remembers.

Among her recorded songs that became hits were "Hindi Ako Iyak," "Lihim na Pag-Ibig" and "Nababaliw Ako." She also

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7 THE FOUNTAIN 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
8 THE PROMISE 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
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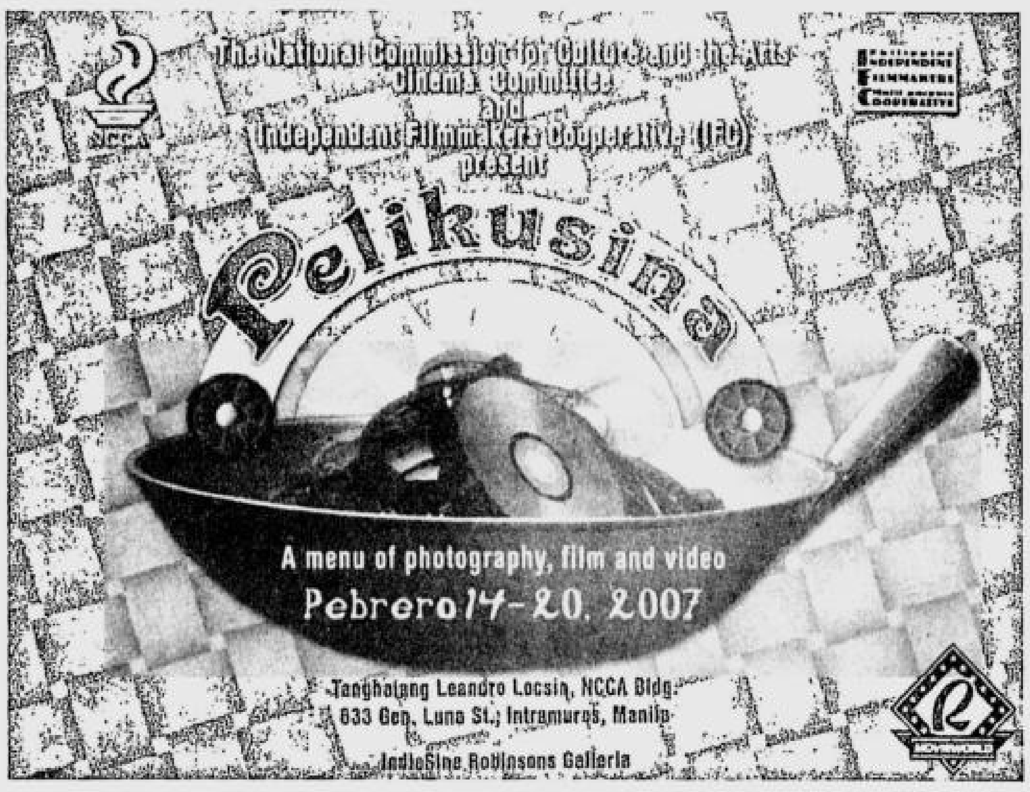
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GHOST RIDER 12:00 / 1:55 / 2:30 / 4:25 5:00 / 6:55 / 7:30 / 9:25 / 10:00
THE PROMISE 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:50 / 4:30 / 7:10 / 9:50
MUSIC & LYRICS 12:15 / 2:35 / 4:55 / 7:15 / 9:50
THE FOUNTAIN 12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30
Globe PLATINUM CINEMA
APOCALYPTO 12:40 / 3:40 / 6:40 / 9:40
THE HOLIDAY 12:40 / 3:30 / 6:40 / 9:30
THE MESSENGERS 1:00 / 3:00 / 5:00 / 7:00 / 9:00
MUSIC & LYRICS 2:00 / 4:20 / 6:40 / 9:00
ALIMALL 5
1 HANNIBAL RISING 1:15 / 3:45 / 6:15 / 8:45
2 GHOST RIDER 12:55 / 3:25 / 5:55 / 8:25
3 MUSIC & LYRICS 1:05 / 3:25 / 5:45 / 8:05
4 TROIKA 12:10 / 2:15 / 4:20 / 6:25 / 8:30
5 THE PROMISE 12:10 R4 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS
For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph
ARANETA COLISEUM
PBA CHAMPIONSHIP Feb 21. Wednesday, 7pm - Ginebra VS San Miguel
VINA MORALES "SHOWGIRL" THE REPEAT February 24. Saturday, 8 pm

recorded "Huling Sampaguita sa Tag-Araw," from the musical "Ikabod."

The late great songwriter George Canseco gave Susana two songs, "Biro" and "Nakaw na Pag-Ibig." These Canseco ballads were used in the Lino Brocka movie "Nakaw na Pag-Ibig," starring Nora Aunor, Phillip Salvador and Hilda Koronel.

Susana also interpreted "Don't Deceive Yourself," an entry in the 5th Metro Pop Music Festival in 1982.

She recounts that she shared the concert stage with Rico J. Puno, Anthony Castelo, Dale Adriatico and Dulce in Manila and toured the United States and .Canada with the "Balik Saya" troupe led by Florante.

Full orchestra

Although she had performed abroad, her shows back in the country, in Manila's finest clubs, proved to be more memorable.

"Things were different then. Using a minus one tape was unheard of. I sang with a full orchestra. That's why I've accumulated two cabinets filled with *areglos* (musical arrangements) by the best musical arrangers—Dominic Celestiano, Virling Villapando, Amado Pascual and Gerry Matias."

Among the best-applauded songs in her concerts were "New York, New York," "With One More Look at You," "Watch Closely Now," the standards of Sammy Davis Jr. and other Broadway show-stoppers.

As a tribute to her roots, she waxed an album of Ilocano folk songs like "Ayatenka" and "Inay-ayatka."

Among her contemporaries, she tips her hat to Lerma de la Cruz, Miriam Pantig and Dulce.

In her blood

Music is in her blood, she says, adding that all 10 of her brothers and sisters inherited her father Pedro's love for music.

WITH the young Francine Prieto in 1988

"My dad was a renowned jazz pianist. My uncle Ben sang Spanish songs. My brother Pedro Jr. is a drummer. Four of my sisters are singers, too. Marie, Sonia and Cherry were my back-up vocalists when I was still active. My other sister Nieves is a singer-choreographer. My sister Cherry now teaches basic voice in my studio," she relates.

Now, her own daughter, nephews and nieces are showing interest in show business.

"My eldest Frida Nepomuceno impersonates Kris Aquino in her father Willie's shows," she notes happily. "She had a successful show with her dad at the Music Museum last December."

These days, she has gladly turned over the stage to her daughter and students.

Last December, she mounted a recital for her students in Las Piñas, where the Susana Pichay Music Studio is located (BF Resort Village).

"I have students as young as four years old. Some of the teenage students' parents also studied music with me. There's no age limit. For as long as they have the passion for singing, they're welcome to my studio," she enthuses.

... with Jennylyn Mercado

... and with sisters Nieves, Sonia and Cherry

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 GHOST RIDER
MTRCB PG-13
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
MTRCB PG-13
2:10, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

3 GHOST RIDER
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 3:50, 6.40, 9:30

4 THE HOLIDAY
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
THE FOUNTAIN
MTRCB PG-13
12.40, 3 00, 5 20, 7.40, 10 00

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For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	THE HOLIDAY	2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10	PG-13
2	GHOST RIDER	2:30, 5:20, 8:10, 11:00	PG-13
3	MUSIC & LYRICS	12:55, 3:20, 5:55, 8:30, 11:00	PG-13
4	THE FOUNTAIN	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:50	PG-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

THE HOLIDAY PG13 1:30,4:20,7:10,10:00	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER R13 12:40,3:05	MUSIC AND LYRICS PG13 12:50,3:15,5:40, 8:05,10:30
GHOST RIDER PG13 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	THE FOUNTAIN PG13 1:45,3:55,6:05,8:15	GHOST RIDER PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

MOVIES AND SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE - FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898 1440-41
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CINEMA 1 GHOST RIDER
10:30 , 1:20 , 4:10
7:00 , 9:50
PG-13

CINEMA 2 THE PROMISE
11:10 , 1:35 , 4:00
6:25 , 8:50
PG-13

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NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3 THE FOUNTAIN
11:10 , 1:35 , 3:50
6:05 , 8:20 , 10:35
PG-13

CINEMA 4 MUSIC AND LYRICS
11:15 , 2:00 , 4:40
7:20 , 10:00
PG-13

CINEMA 5 GHOST RIDER
11:05 , 2:00 , 4:50
7:40 , 10:30
PG-13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM	Feb 16 & 17 , 2007	Passion Y Fuego	8:00 PM
	March 08 , 2007	EDNA LEDESMA " DANCING W/ THE CHAMPIONS "	8:00 PM
	March 16 & 23 , 2007	SITTI ... IN LOVE	8:00 PM
TEATRINO PROMENADE GREENHILLS	EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
	Feb 20 , 2007	DYOROS KO PO	8:00 PM
	March 9 , 2007	DAVE	8:00 PM

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 MUSIC & LYRICS	2 GHOST RIDER	3 THE FOUNTAIN	4 THE PROMISE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 THE FOUNTAIN	2 GHOST RIDER	3 THX GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 THE HISTORY BOYS	5 THE MESSENGERS	6 MUSIC & LYRICS	7 THE PROMISE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX MUSIC & LYRICS GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE HISTORY BOYS GUARANTEED SEATS	4 GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE FOUNTAIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	2 MUSIC & LYRICS		
	3 THE FOUNTAIN	4 THE HOLIDAY	5 THE PROMISE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 THE PROMISE	4 THE MESSENGERS
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE PROMISE	2 THE FOUNTAIN		
	3 THE MESSENGERS	4 GHOST RIDER	5 MUSIC & LYRICS	

At the Activity Center

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
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Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
YOU GOT ME movie promo tour feat. Sam Milby, Toni Gonzaga, Zanjo Marudo & other guest stars February 16, 2007	Auto Focus '07 People's Choice Awards February 17, 2007
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Microsoft Vista Launching February 16, 2007	The Philippine International Jazz & Arts Festival February 20, 2007

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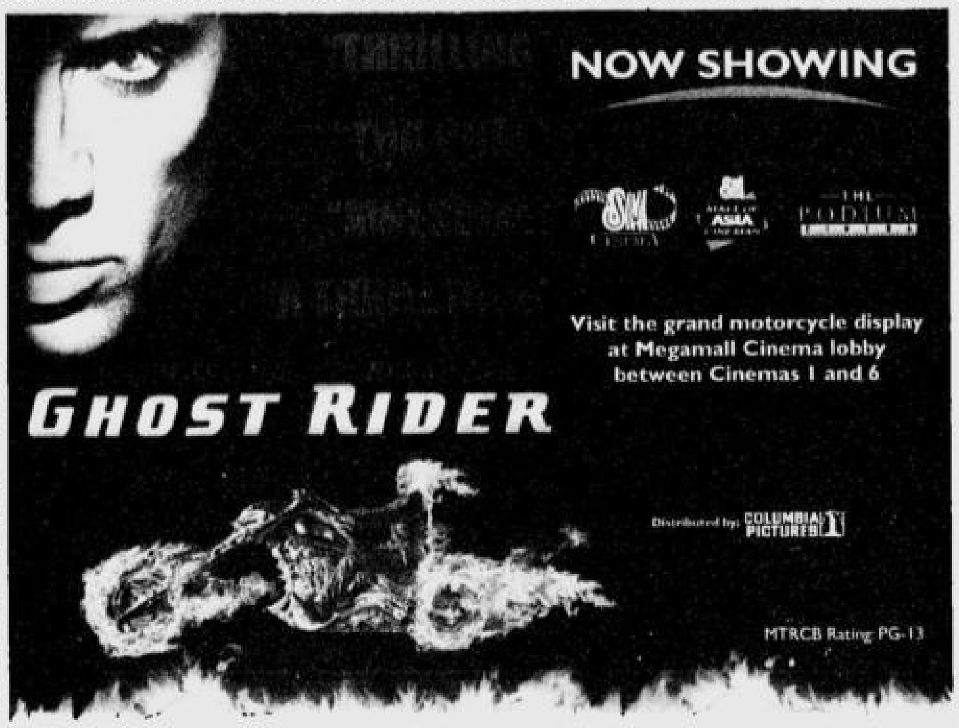

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METRO MANILA

SM MALL OF ASIA 556-0104
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NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
11:00AM 3:30PM 6:00PM 8:30PM
Matinee Fee- P200 Primetime Fee- P250
T-REX IN 3D
2:15PM
Admission Fee- P200
1 MUSIC AND LYRICS
2 GHOST RIDER/ CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE FOUNTAIN
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 THE PROMISE/ THE HOLIDAY
PREMIERE CINEMA
THE PROMISE
CENTERSTAGE
GHOST RIDER
THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
GHOST RIDER
CINEMA 2
MUSIC AND LYRICS
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452
1 GHOST RIDER
2 CATCH AND RELEASE
3 THE FOUNTAIN
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 MUSIC AND LYRICS
7 GHOST RIDER
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
9 LOVE FEST 2007
10 AGENT X44
11 THE PROMISE
12 THE PROMISE

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 THE PROMISE
2 THE MESSENGER
3 GHOST RIDER
4 GHOST RIDER
5 THE PROMISE
6 MUSIC AND LYRICS
7 THE FOUNTAIN
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
9 THE PROMISE
10 THE PROMISE
11 BABEL
12 THE HOLIDAY

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 THE PROMISE
2 THE CLEANER
3 GHOST RIDER
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 THE MESSENGER
7 GHOST RIDER
8 THE PROMISE
9 MUSIC AND LYRICS
10 AGENT X44
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 THE MESSENGER
6 THE CLEANER
7 LOVE FEST 2007
8 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
9 THE HOLIDAY
10 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE MESSENGER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 THE PROMISE
5 LOVE FEST 2007
6 GHOST RIDER

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 THE PROMISE
2 GHOST RIDER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 GHOST RIDER
5 THE FOUNTAIN
6 THE PROMISE
7 THE HOLIDAY
8 THE MESSENGER
9 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
4 MUSIC AND LYRICS

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 GHOST RIDER
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 THE MESSENGER
6 GHOST RIDER
7 THE FOUNTAIN
8 THE HOLIDAY
9 THE CLEANER
10 AGENT X44
11 THE PROMISE
12 THE PROMISE

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323301-04
1 THE MESSENGER
2 THE PROMISE
3 TENACIOUS D
4 GHOST RIDER

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 THE PROMISE

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975
1 THE MESSENGER
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 MUSIC AND LYRICS

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SM CITY BACOOR (046)417-3868
1 THE MESSENGER
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 GHOST RIDER
4 THE PROMISE
5 GHOST RIDER
6 THE PROMISE
7 MUSIC AND LYRICS
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 THE HOLIDAY
2 GHOST RIDER
3 MUSIC AND LYRICS
4 THE MESSENGER
5 THE PROMISE
6 THE PROMISE

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE PROMISE

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 THE PROMISE
4 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE MESSENGER
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 THE CLEANER
5 MUSIC AND LYRICS
6 THE PROMISE

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925
1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
2 THE PROMISE
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 THE PROMISE
2 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD
3 THE RETURN
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE MESSENGER
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 THE PROMISE

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
1 THE PROMISE
2 MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5349811
1 LOVE FEST 2007
2 THE MESSENGER
3 THE PROMISE
4 GHOST RIDER

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 BABEL
2 GHOST RIDER
3 LOVE FEST 2007
4 THE CLEANER
5 MUSIC AND LYRICS
6 THE MESSENGER
7 THE PROMISE
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 BABEL
2 RESERVED
3 THE CLEANER
4 THE PROMISE
5 GHOST RIDER
6 THE HOLIDAY
7 RESERVED
8 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 GHOST RIDER
2 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
3 THE PROMISE
4 THE MESSENGER
5 BLOOD DIAMOND
6 BABEL

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884
1 GHOST RIDE
2 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
3 THE PROMISE
4 THE MESSENGER

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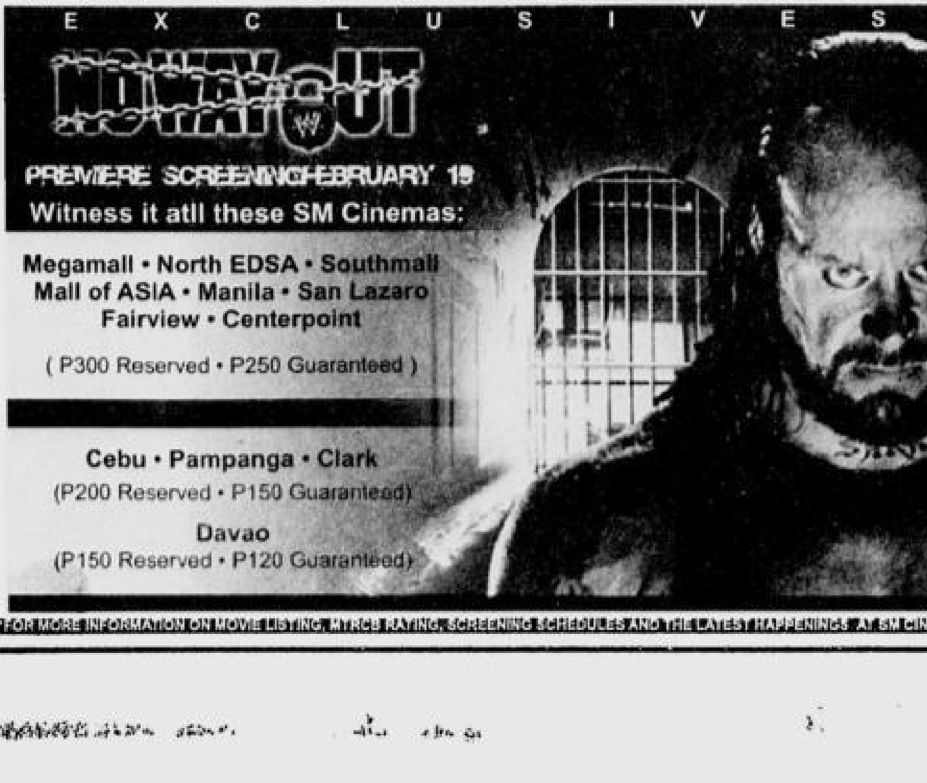

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MOVIE GUIDE
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SHANG CINEPLEX
1 (DOLBY) GHOSTRIDER
2 (DOLBY) MUSIC AND LYRICS
3 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
4 (DOLBY) THE HOLIDAY
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) THE FOUNTAIN

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC & LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

starmall EDSA/SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 GHOST RIDER
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) THE PROMISE
5 TROIKA

metropolis star cinema
www.cinemacity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504286, 5433994
1 THE PROMISE
2 TROIKA
3 GHOST RIDER
4 APOCALYPTO

THEATRES
CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 THE PROMISE

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel: (042) 660-5271
1 THE PROMISE
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 RESRVED
4 RESRVED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2 GHOST RIDER
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 THE FOUNTAIN
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 GHOST RIDER
7 MUSIC & LYRICS
8 APOCALYPTO / HANNIBAL RISING
9 THE MESSENGERS
10 THE PROMISE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sta. Nino, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) THE PROMISE
2 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY) MUSIC & LYRICS
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) APOCALYPTO
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 MUSIC & LYRICS
5 TROIKA

THE MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 THE PROMISE
2 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3 TROIKA
4 APOCALYPTO/NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 THE PROMISE
2 GHOST RIDER
3 TROIKA

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 GHOST RIDER
2 KAMASUTRA-3

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 MUSIC & LYRICS
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 THE HOLIDAY

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 THE PROMISE
2 ERAGON

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) THE HOLIDAY
2 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY) MUSIC & LYRICS
4 (DOLBY) THE FOUNTAIN

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 APOCALYPTO
2 THE PROMISE
3 GHOST RIDER
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 THE PROMISE
3 BLOOD DIAMOND

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 THE PROMISE
2 BLOOD CHOCOLATE
3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM/DECK THE HALLS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 APOCALYPTO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 THE PROMISE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 TROIKA
2 ROOM SERVICE
3 KISKISAN
4 APOCALYPTO

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 APOCALYPTO
2 TATLONG BARAHA
3 THE PROMISE
4 PARAISO
5 GHOST RIDER

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 HANNIBAL RISING
4 THE PROMISE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 TUKSO SI CHARITO

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

ROUNDUP

Program turns 12

The on-the-air counseling program "Echoes of the Heart" (DWIZ 882 AM) celebrated its 12th anniversary last Feb. 16 with outreach activities for the benefit of 100 former leprosy patients.

First aired Feb. 14, 1995, the program can be heard Mondays through Fridays, 2:30 to 3 p.m. and on Saturdays, 2 to 4 p.m.

It is hosted by former beauty queen Vangie Pascual and daughters Rubymae and Eggpie.

'Amazing Race 11'

"Amazing Race 11, Amazing Race All-Stars" premieres today, 9 a.m. live via satellite with a replay at 8 p.m. on Studio 23.

The show makes a comeback with 11 all-star teams from seven of its 10 seasons.

The teams have to endure "extreme heat to extreme cold—from a desert in northern Chile to borderline South Pole in Antarctica," according to producer Van Munster.

'Divine dance'

Jason Zamora and Jon Supan of the dance group Manoeuvres started as backup dancers for Gary Valenciano before they made a name for themselves.

In one of their out-of-town events, they experienced the "divine dance" which made them strive to be in tune with the choreography of life.

This episode of "May Power Ka Ba?," a live TV special of "The 700 Club Asia," airs tonight at 11 p.m. on QTV 11.

'E! News' on ETC

"E! News" and "The Daily 10" are now seen on ETC (Channel 52 on Skycable) Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9 to 10 p.m.

GUILIANA De Pandi and Ryan Seacrest

Hosted by Ryan Seacrest and Guiliana De Pandi, "E! News" brings in the hottest entertainment stories, trends and exclusive interviews from Hollywood.

Airing back to back with the celebrity news program is "The Daily 10" hosted by Sal Masekela, Debbi Matenopoulos and Catt Sadler.

The program highlights the top 10 stories of the day, as well as the latest pop culture information that captures public attention.

New programs

2nd Avenue offers hot new shows on cable television. "Men in Trees" (Mondays, 9 p.m.) is a fun and sexy ensemble drama about finding love in the most unexpected places.

"Hell's Kitchen" (Wednesdays, 9 p.m.) is about 12 wannabe restaurateurs who go up against each other for a chance to own a restaurant and train under world-renowned chef Gordon Ramsay.

"Real Housewives of Orange County" (Thursdays, 8 p.m.) is a reality series that focuses on five real-life housewives living in a protected Southern California enclave.

"Saved" (Fridays, 8 p.m.) chronicles medical school dropout-turned-paramedic Wyatt Cole, who finds the breakneck pace of his 24-hour shift a welcome escape from his inner demons.

2nd Avenue is currently being aired on Channel 53 at Sky Cable Gold and Channel 28 on Global Destiny Cable.

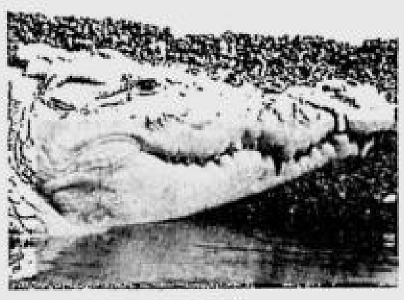
'Monster Crocs'

Some 30 years ago in Papua New Guinea, crocodile biologist Romulus Whitaker measured the skin of a saltwater crocodile at just over 20 foot.

Since that day in 1982, only one other animal was authentically measured at that length. Whitaker is worried those giant specimens may be lost forever.

On his 63rd year, he has decided to go on a personal journey that will take him across four continents and bring him face-to-face with some of the world's largest crocodiles.

"Monster Crocs" airs Feb. 21, 11 a.m. on National Geographic Channel.


"MONSTER CROCS"

Cinema club

Smart Communications, Inc. invites the public to join the Smart Buddy Cinema Club, a movie community where Smart and Talk N' Text subscribers can access everything about movies—downloads, trivia and celebrity news. Members are informed of the movies to hit theaters, the latest movie-themed wallpapers and ring tones for their mobile phones.

Subscribers may join the club by sending JOIN to 239.

Lani comes home

Lani Misalucha takes time out from her engagement at The Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas to perform in a series of mall tours to promote her self-titled album released by Universal Records.

She will also appear in a concert titled "Lani Misalucha Missing You" at the Araneta Coliseum on March 17, 8 p.m.

LANI MISALUCHA

Porn assault

NEW YORK—The good name and dignity of the classic 1960s film "La Dolce Vita," directed by Federico Fellini, is being sullied by two gay pornographic movies using the same name, a lawsuit claims.

International Media Films Inc. accused Manhattan filmmaker Andrei Treivas Bregman of trademark and copyright infringement for the porn films he made under his business name, Michael Lucas. The lawsuit filed Thursdsay seeks to stop sales of the porn movies, "Michael Lucas' La Dolce Vita" Parts 1 and 2, and to collect unspecified damages.

The Manhattan-based International Media Films said it believed the pornographic films, released last month, will continue to "infringe, tarnish and dilute" its trademark rights to the highly decorated "La Dolce Vita," which won the Golden Palm at Cannes in 1961.

"LA DOLCE VITA"

HUGH Jackman and Rachel Weisz in "The Fountain"

Review

Puzzling & challenging experiment

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit, *Contributor*

ACCLAIMED FILMMAKER DARREN ARONOFSKY ("Requiem for a Dream") returns with the dramatic but patience-testing "The Fountain," a dreamlike piece that speaks of undying love and the setbacks of mortality, among other things.

Overly ponderous and existential, the film finely presents Aronofsky as an artist who doesn't shy away from experimentation, and who imbues his work with thought-provoking substance. It's also like an abstract painting that's hard to get clear and obvious meaning from.

It's immediately established, however, that two lovers are at the center of it. Tommy (Hugh Jackman), a well-meaning but reckless scientist, defiantly tries to stave off the impending death of his cancer-stricken wife Izzi (Rachel Weisz). Discovering the regenerative properties of a previously untested substance after he and his team used it on an ailing monkey, Tommy becomes optimistic that Izzi can be miraculously healed, as well. Enter Izzi's notebook, which contains a story she's been writing, about the adventures of a Spanish conquistador captain, Tomas (also played by Jackman). Tomas, Izzi writes, has been tasked by the Queen (also played by Weisz) to go on a special quest.

Mystical elements

It's not explained if Izzi's fictional story is based on actual accounts of a past life, but the time she shares with her husband leads one to assume that these events, as well as the repeated mention of symbolic and/or mystical elements like the Fountain of Youth and the Tree of Life, are no coincidence. But then, there's a third character played by Jackman, a bald, levitating being in a floating bubble who contemplates life, death and similarly heavy things. Who that guy is exactly, we're not clearly told, but he pops up repeatedly with a parallel story about related heartaches.

According to the movie's production information, that's Tom, a 26th-century astronaut (yes, you read that right) who's trying to cope with the elusive mysteries that have plagued him in the past. This character's scenes are accompanied by flashy, sparkly special effects, and while his presence in the movie offers a third perspective that further questions the limits of mortal relationships, it's hard to accept him as more than an imaginary figure in a totally trippy, starlit environment.

Had it been convincingly explained who this 26th century character was, it may have made him more valuable and less pretentious. Still, there are visual tricks that make him blend in, and his puzzling drama is soon rivaled by the 16th century conquistador's.

Interconnected

The three time-separated men—Tomas, Tommy, Tom—are creatively interconnected and strongly personified by Jackman, but ones needs to read the production notes to make sense of the whole shared-quest thing.

The special effects-aided imagery and the time-jumping narrative make Aronofsky's story confusing. On the one hand, "The Fountain" challenges its viewers to think; on the other, one only vaguely gets that it's about acceptance and letting go. One is left with little more to do than some head-scratching.

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
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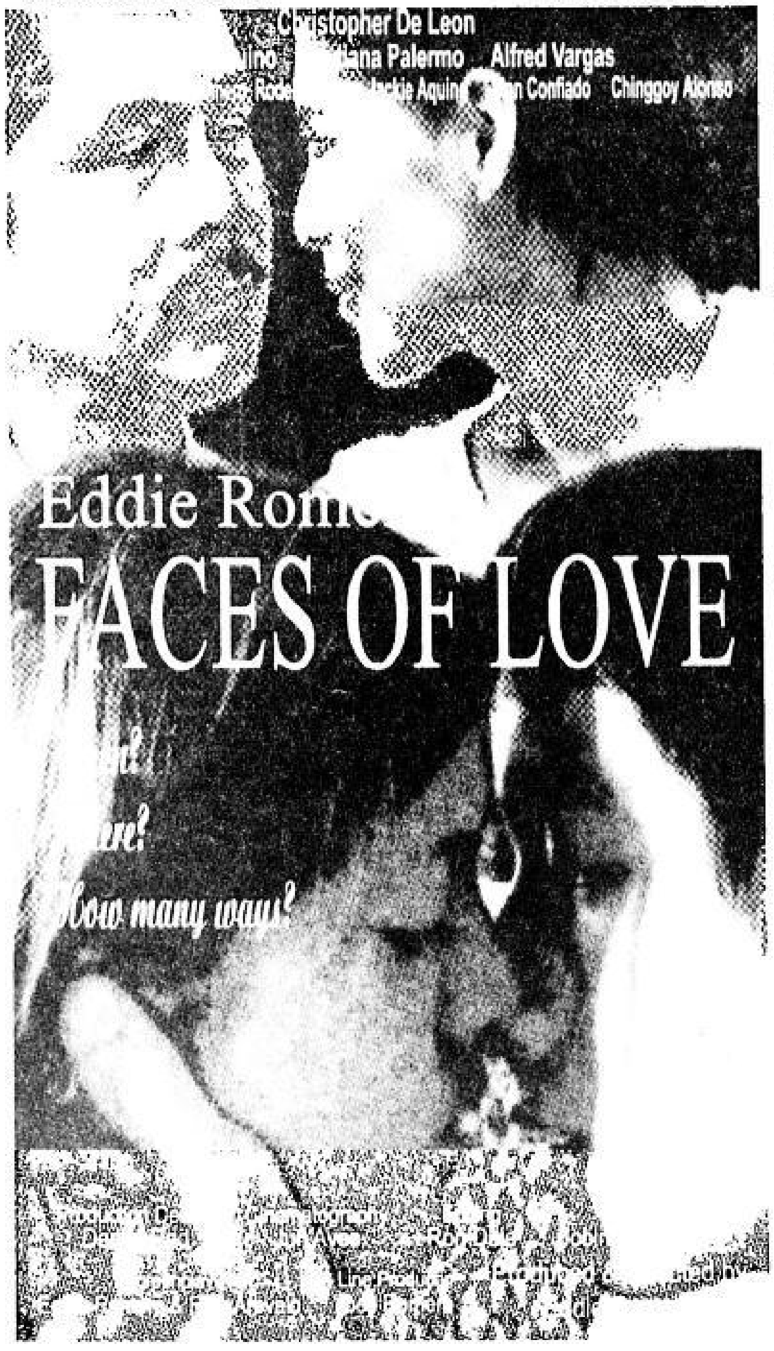
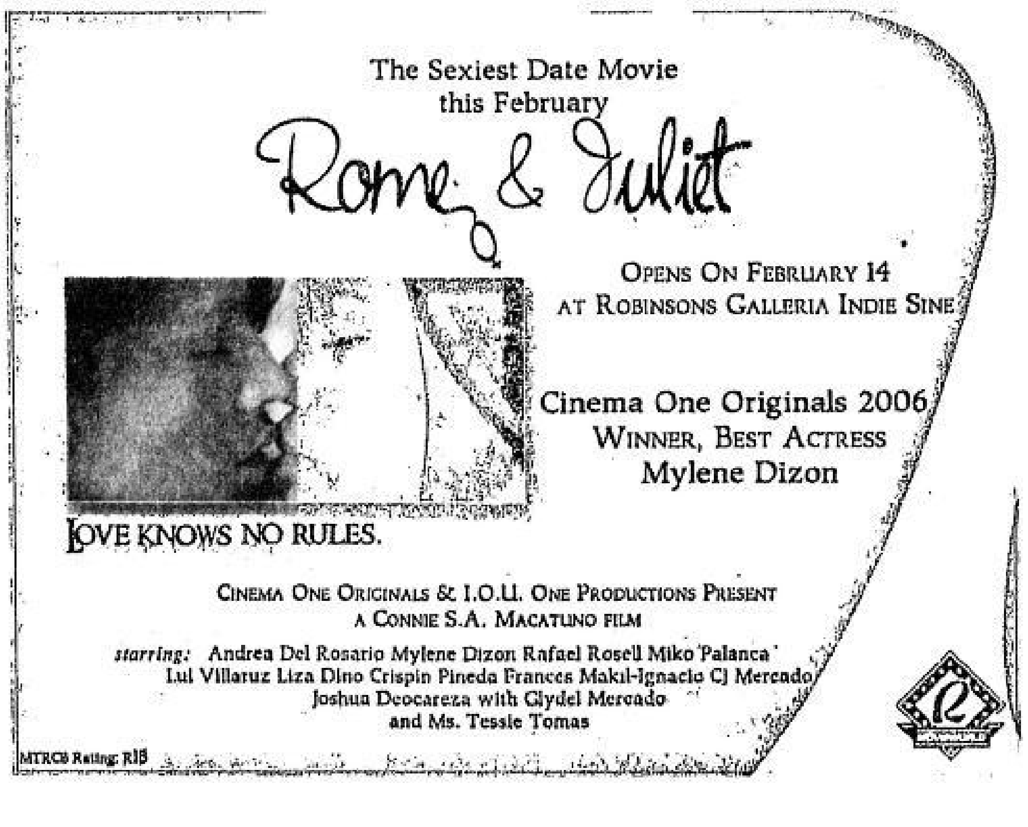


Christopher De Leon
ino ana Palermo Alfred Vargas
Rode ckie Aquino n Confiado Chinggoy Alonso
Eddie Romo
FACES OF LOVE
How many ways?



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Joshua Deocareza with Glydel Mercado
and Ms. Tessie Tomas
MTRCB Rating: R13

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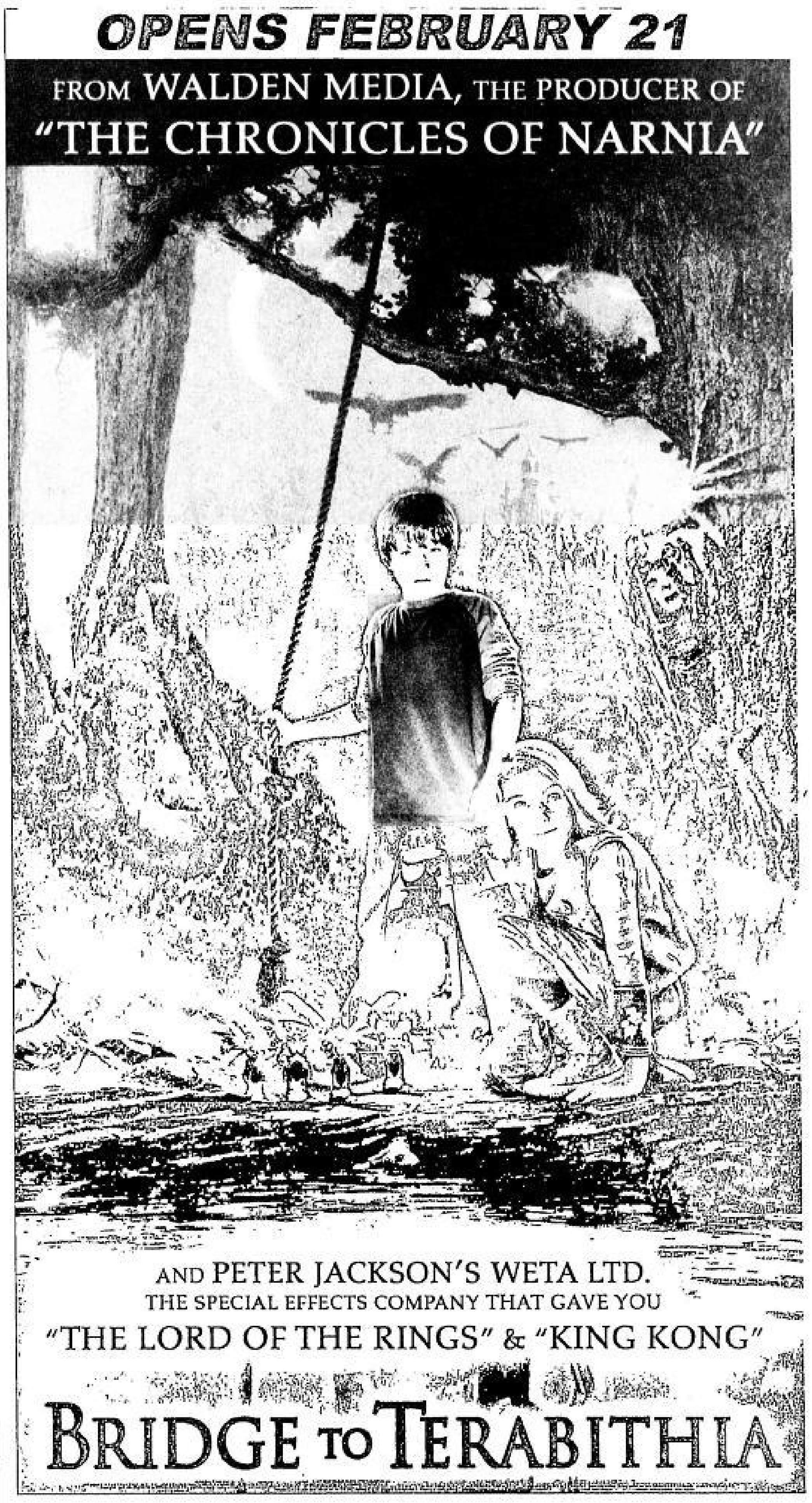

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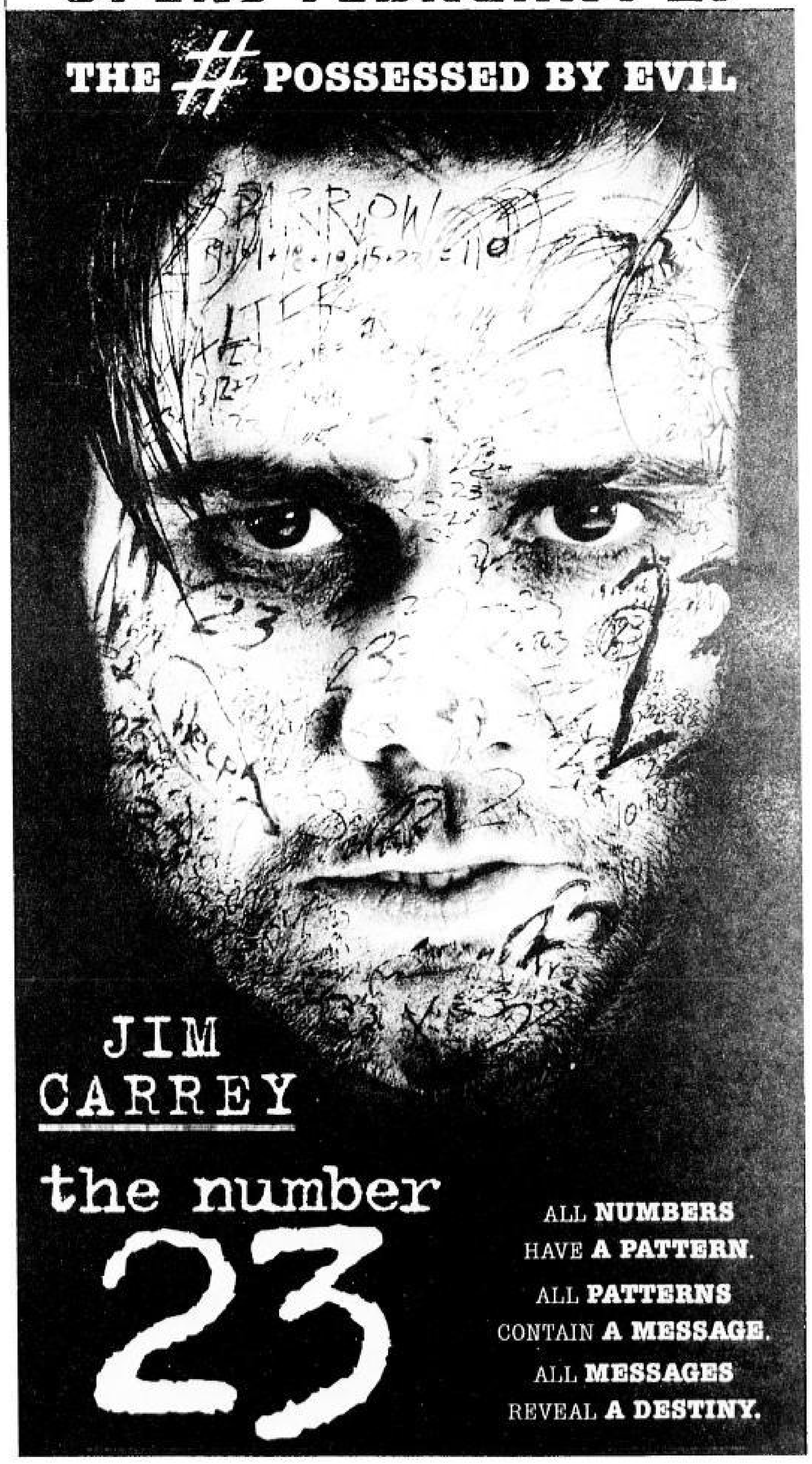

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Having worked with the very best ...

DID YOU KNOW...

EDDIE ROMERO HAS WORKED with the very best and the very famous—from Mona Lisa to Martin Sheen, from Gerry de Leon to Francis Ford Coppola.

Romero was overall Philippine coordinator when Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" was shot in the country in 1976.

On the set in Laguna that was ravaged by a typhoon, Romero met the great Marlon Brando. Romero recalled: "I talked to him a few times—purely routine. People said he was a holy terror. But I think he was only difficult with the big shots. With working stiffs like me, he was nice!"

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ON THE set of "Faces of Love" with Christopher de Leon, second from right and Angel Aquino, right.

Faces of a filmmaker

TAKE FIVE

National Artist for Film Eddie Romero insists he is just an observer, at best just a storyteller

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

ACCORDING TO SON JOEY ROMERO, Eddie Romero, National Artist for Film and the Broadcast Arts, seemed "inspired," charged with excitement while shooting his "comeback" film, "Faces of Love."

The last movies that the elder Romero directed were the 1988 foreign flicks, "A Case of Honor," starring Timothy Bottoms and John Philip Law, and "Whiteforce," top-billed by Sam J. Jones and Timothy Hughes.

A year before he worked on those, Romero had megged the Filipino film, "Hari sa Hari, Lahi sa Lahi (King and Emperor)," a co-production with China that featured Vic Vargas and Gang Wang in lead roles.

Two decades has passed since "Hari," yet the 82-year-old filmmaker insists he's in "no hurry."

Between 1987 and 2007, Romero occupied himself with TV projects (most notably, "Noli me Tangere," the mini-series, in 1992).

What inspired him to make this return to the big screen? Was it digital technology, which is said to make movie-making easier?

He puts it simply: "I just wanted to use my subsidies from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)."

On the set of "Faces," he reportedly maintained a relaxed, even playful mood.

Shot with a mini-DV camera then blown-up to film, "Faces," which opens nationwide on Wednesday, was graded A by the Cinema Evaluation Board.

The Film Development Council of the Philippines and the Department of Education, through Undersecretary Vilma Labrador, is launching a movie review-writing contest with "Faces" as subject, for elementary and high-school students and teachers.

What was the shift to digital like?

It wasn't so much about the cost because if you are shooting on HD (high-definition digital camera), the difference is not that big. But going digital is so much more convenient. The cameras and other equipment are so much lighter. Set-ups are quicker; lighting, easier. Before we submitted the product for film transfer, we corrected the flaws [in sound and color grading] and before it was printed on 35mm film, the post-production house (Roadrunner) made further corrections. In the end, we got the best possible film transfer.

This is your fourth film with Christopher de Leon (after "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon," "Aguila" and "Kamakalawa"). Is he your favorite actor?

Not really. It's just that I come up with characters that are perfect for him. I didn't really think of him (while I was writing the script with Rica Arevalo), but Don Arcadio (the hero of "Faces") suits him.

What was the shoot like?

It was a lot of fun. I heard the actors saying in interviews that they never imagined it would be so easy working with me.

Well, I had gone into motion pictures because I didn't like regular work. I wanted to play. On my sets, there is very little stress, if any.

In my entire career, I've never had a hard time with actors. Even in the heyday of Leopoldo Salcedo and Carmen Rosales, who were supposed to be temperamental, I never had any problem.

What is your directing style?

I just talk to the actors about the characters they are playing. If they have a suggestion, I discuss it with them. Then, we shoot. If they are not content with the take, I re-shoot. But then I torture them. After the re-take, I tell them that the first shot was better!

Apart from NCCA and CEB grants and subsidies, what else could help filmmakers?

EDDIE ROMERO

In my opinion, there is a need to classify the movies as an essential industry. With so much taxes, we cannot be competitive. Even before a movie opens, taxes—on film stock, for example— are already imposed. After a movie's run, even before a producer can recoup his investment, he's once again levied (amusement tax).

What will it take to declare the movies an essential industry?

An act of Congress. Then we can ask for certain exemptions, like the tax on film stock—about 40 percent of its cost goes to taxes.

What can make moviegoers troop back to theaters?

The composition of the movie audience has changed. It's no longer the lowest economic classes; younger, middle-class people go to the movies now. The *masa* would rather buy [pirated] DVDs. It's cheaper that way. My target audience has always been the middle class because my cultural framework is very different from that of the D and E crowd.

Your movies speak to the middle class?

I always say that if there is a message in my movies, you have to look for it yourself. I consider myself an observer, not an advocate. My only goal is to be true to my characters. It's up to the audience to decide whether they are good or bad. I am just an observer and a storyteller.

What's your dream project?

I wrote this story, called "Bago Sumikat ang Araw," four years ago. It's a love story with the Katipunan revolution and the conflict between Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo, as backdrop. It's a period film; it will cost a lot. Until I get funding, that film is just an idle speculation. Ha-ha-ha!

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"KABUL Express"

Afghanistan's first post-Taliban movie

DIRECTOR KABIR KHAN'S "KABUL EXPRESS" tells the story of five people from different worlds whose paths were destined to cross in a country devastated by war.

The movie is set in post-9/11 Afghanistan. The American bombing has crushed the Taliban regime, whose fugitive soldiers are thus trying to escape to Pakistan.

Against this turbulent backdrop, Jai and Suhel—two Indian television reporters—have entered the country, with the aim of getting a rare interview with a Talibani.

Helping them in their pursuit is their Afghan guide, translator and driver, Khyber, in his Toyota Jeep called Kabul Express.

The movie stars Arshad Warsi, John Abraham, Salman Shahid, Hanif Humghum and Linda Arsenio.

It will be shown from Feb. 21 to 27, regular screening hours, at the Robinsons Galleria in Ortigas Center.